

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



Fire This Time!

WHY WE MUST SUPPORT REFUGEE RIGHTS



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OUR MOTHER EARTH & CLIMATE CHANGE



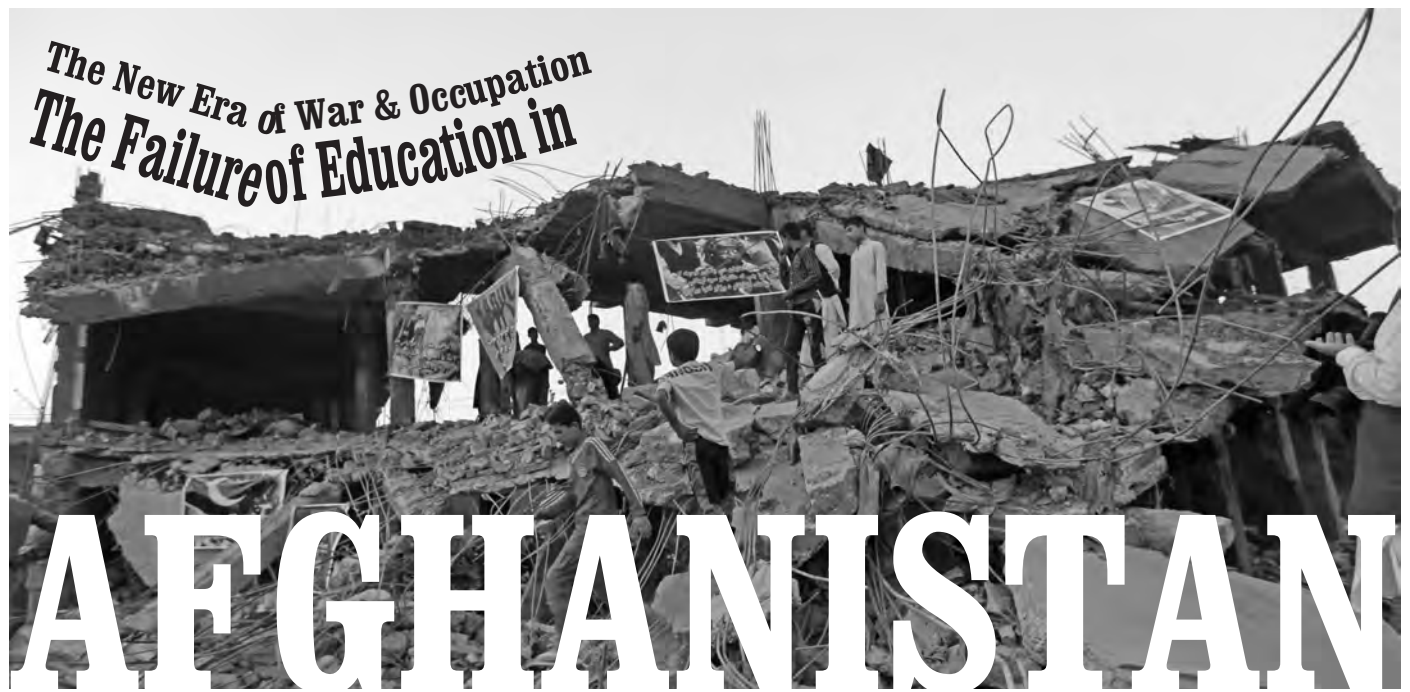
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THE NEW ERA OF WAR & OCCUPATION
THE FAILURE OF EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

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By Nita Palmer

October 7th 2015 marks fourteen years since the United States invaded Afghanistan. Tens of thousands of lives have been lost in the longest war in US and Canadian history. From the beginning the war has been mired in controversy - from torture to corruption to bombing and shooting of unarmed civilians, many have questioned how much good foreign forces are doing in Afghanistan. But through all of this, the education of young Afghans has remained one of the so-called 'bright spots' in the controversial war. Even during the worst fighting, promising reports came of new schools built, accompanied by pictures of soldiers standing alongside Afghan children, smiling proudly in front of their new school.

Afghan Education: Myth vs. Reality

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) claims that the number of students attending school in Afghanistan has increased from 900,000 in 2002 to 8 million today, including 2.5 million girls. Certainly these figures sound promising - except that they are completely inaccurate.

An investigation by BuzzFeed news earlier this year spot checked USAID-funded schools in Afghanistan, and found that one in ten of the schools were "closed, not operating, or were never built in the first place". And at the schools that were still operating, they found "far fewer students than were officially recorded as enrolled... Girls, whom the US particularly wanted to draw into formal schooling, were overcounted in official records by about 40%".

In parts of Afghanistan where military operation against the Taliban has been the

most intense, BuzzFeed News found that the number of schools not functioning was even higher: "In Kandahar province... a full third of the 423 schools the Ministry of Education publicly reported as open in 2011 were not functioning, and in Helmand, it was more than half." In Zabul, as many as three quarters of the schools were not functioning.

US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko has also noted that "the [Afghan Ministry of Education] counts absent students as 'enrolled' for up to three years before dropping them from the rolls". Of the 8.35 million students that the Ministry claims are enrolled, 1.55 million are 'absent'. Even these numbers could be overly optimistic, as there is no outside verification of the numbers. John Sopko told those attending his May 5 presentation at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York that "I can report that a ranking USAID official in Afghanistan has told us that the number of students actually attending Afghan schools may be on the order of four million, not the eight million widely reported as enrolled. This lower number has been confirmed by a number of Afghan civil society organizations also." But even this number - more than fifty percent less than official counts - does not necessarily reflect students attending full-time. Even those who currently attend school are often forced to come late or miss classes because they need to work to feed their families.

Even for students who attend classes regularly, the quality of education is questionable. A 2011 report by the Afghan Ministry of Education stated that 68% of teachers "did not meet standard qualifications for trained professional teachers (grade 14 graduate of Teacher Education Colleges (TTC), or their

qualification is lower than 12th grade." In fact, it is questionable whether all teachers are even literate themselves. As well, schools often lack enough books for the students, or students cannot afford books and supplies. Some 'schools' do not have buildings or even tents for the students, but instead are held in open air. In this situation, how could students attend school through Afghanistan's long, cold winters?

Even when there are buildings, they are often in shambles. BuzzFeed News reported that the "overwhelming majority of the more than 50 US-funded schools it visited resemble abandoned buildings — marred by collapsing roofs, shattered glass, boarded-up windows, protruding electrical wires, decaying doors, or other structural defects. At least a quarter of the schools BuzzFeed News visited do not have running water." A report by the SIGAR office found many of the same concerns.

Even those fortunate enough to attend a school with qualified teachers in an actual building do not receive the same level of education we would see in most countries, including Afghanistan's neighbours. School days are about three hours, and the curriculum varies widely - Dari or Pashto, English, math and science are taught in some schools, while others only teach basic literacy and religious subjects.

Girls Losing Out

For girls and young women - who the US and NATO claimed they were in Afghanistan to 'liberate' - education has in fact improved very little. As noted earlier, girls are overcounted by about 40% in schools. While the lack of girls in school is often blamed on Afghanistan's social conservatism, the reality is that there are often simply no schools for them to attend. Many Afghan girls and young women would

love to grow up to be doctors or teachers, writers or scientists - but without access to even basic primary education, these dreams will not become reality.

Although conservative families do prevent some Afghan girls from going to school, there are many practical and safety concerns as well. Girls attending school have been the victims of numerous poisonings and acid attacks by those who do not believe they should receive an education, making many parents justifiably nervous to send them. As well, the lack of female educators is a major problem. According to the Afghan Ministry of Education, "there are no qualified female teachers in 230 districts out of 412 rural and urban districts. As a result, retention and continuation of girls' education in secondary grades are affected. There are no girls in upper secondary grades in 159 districts".

A Corrupt System

USAID alone has spent \$850 million on Afghan education; the government of Canada has spent \$227 million. Yet it seems as though much of these aid dollars are going nowhere - or, more accurately, are funding corruption rather than education. Massively overpriced school construction projects often go to warlords or corrupt 'aid' organizations. These schools are typically poorly constructed, or in some cases, never built but still paid for.

In a study of the state of education in Ghor province, the Afghan Analysts Network found that salaries were often paid to absentee teachers, or were withheld from the teachers and collected by officials in the Ministry of Education or local warlords. A 2005-2006 internal audit by Afghan Ministry of Education found that at least \$12 million in salaries were going to 'ghost teachers' annually.

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission provincial director Jawad Reza'i has noted that in some areas of the country the education system exists on paper only: there are "no classes, no professionally trained teachers - and by the end of each year, fake results of schools exams are being submitted in order to pretend the schools are functioning and to keep the salaries flowing."

Education in Afghanistan Before the US

Invasion

As people living in Canada or the US, we would never accept this poor excuse for education for our own children. Why, then, would we accept it for Afghan kids? Perhaps it is because we have accepted that it is better than nothing, or at least better than what Afghans had before. But yet again, this argument is completely false! In fact, only a generation ago, Afghanistan was making major improvements to its education system. Although educational institutions were still lacking in the country's rural areas, progress was being made and widespread literacy programs had been established. And women were well-represented in schools as well - at the time, 40% of Kabul's doctors and 50% of its university students were women.

The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979 and the civil war that followed crumbled the country's education system. With a lack of formal schooling, many children began to attend religious schools - often funded by the United States.

The Washington Post reported in 2002 that "In the twilight of the Cold War, the United States spent millions of dollars to supply Afghan schoolchildren with textbooks filled with violent images and militant Islamic teachings, part of covert attempts to spur resistance to the Soviet occupation.

The primers, which were filled with talk of jihad and featured drawings of guns, bullets, soldiers and mines, have served since then as the Afghan school system's core curriculum. Even the Taliban used the American-produced books..."

In 2014, the Washington post gave more specific examples of the kind of books being supplied by the US to 'educate' Afghan children at the time:

"Printed both in Pashto and Dari, Afghanistan's two major languages, books such as "The Alphabet for Jihad Literacy" were produced under the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development by the University of Nebraska at Omaha and smuggled into Afghanistan through networks built by the CIA and Pakistan's military intelligence agency, the ISI."

Many of the children educated under this curriculum grew up to be fighters with the Taliban, which took power in Afghanistan in 1996. Under the Taliban, education was strictly curtailed, especially for girls. However, even in these dark days for Afghan education, it was not quite as bad in practical terms as the numbers that are

frequently cited by the media and government agencies show. Although only about a million students were officially enrolled in school, others were educated through informal home schools and schools run by certain aid organizations. Even girls' schools were tolerated to a certain extent by the Taliban, although not officially accepted. This is not to say that education in Afghanistan was in a good state at the time; however, the official numbers used to show how much education has improved under the US/NATO occupation are certainly not accurate.

End the Occupation!

This month, the occupation of Afghanistan will begin its fifteenth year. Tens of thousands of lives have been lost in this war - and for what? When the US first invaded Afghanistan, they claimed that foreign intervention would improve human and women's rights, education, and democracy. Today, none of the stated main objectives of this war have been achieved. In terms of education, little if any progress has been made. The schools we see being proudly opened in news reports are often shuttered within months. Those that remain open often provide substandard education. Other factors such as poverty, unemployment and a lack

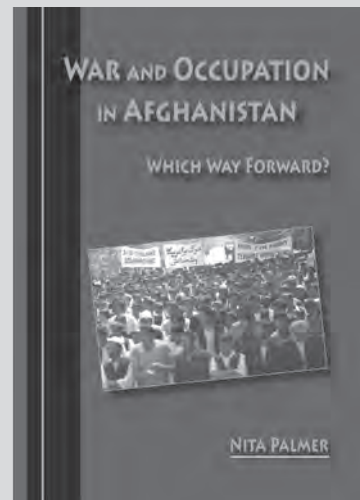
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This open air school, is a typical example of what U.S. and Afghan governments consider 'progress' in education system in Afghanistan.

Battle of Ideas Press

WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?



BY NITA PALMER

Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

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Why Working & Poor People Must Support Refugee Rights...



Open the Borders, Let 200,000 Refugees Come In to Share Life With Us!

By Alison Bodine

On Thursday September 3, 2015 "Syria" became the most searched term on Google in Canada with "how to sponsor a Syrian," the top related search. That day, an image of a 3-year old boy from Syria, lying dead on a Turkish beach, opened the eyes of many people around the world to the tragic reality of the refugee crisis in Europe today.

Unfortunately, this horrific photo and the death of Alan Kurdi, whose brother and mother also died attempting to cross from Turkey into Greece, is only one of thousands of refugee deaths in the Mediterranean in just the past year. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), nearly 2,900 people have died so far this year crossing the Mediterranean for Europe and somewhere safe to be.

Humanity is in exodus from the Middle East and Africa, fleeing wars, occupations and the complete destruction of their lives. By the end of September 2015, 540,000 refugees arrived on the shores of Europe through the Mediterranean crossing (which includes crossing the Aegean Sea). Every day an average of 5,000 refugees land in Italy or Greece on overcrowded rafts and boats. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) now estimates that 1.4 million people will make the perilous crossing through the "sea of death" by the end of 2016.

No Other Choice

Refugees are risking their lives and leaving everything they have ever known because they have no other choice; no future in their home countries and no end in sight to the wars and occupations that have torn apart their reality. Just under 50% of refugees landing in Europe this year have been from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, with the largest percentage, one-third of all refugees, coming from Syria. This

is no surprise considering that these countries have had their basic social fabric bombed to pieces by imperialist wars, occupations and foreign intervention. This refugee crisis, the movement of desperate people at a level not seen since World War II, is a result of the new era of war and occupation. This period of imperialist wars and occupations began with the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and continues to expand today, with the most recent attacks coming in the form of the criminal and deadly U.S.-backed Saudi bombing of Yemen.

One only has to read the news headlines to see how this imperialist onslaught on humanity has continued. Just in late September, U.S. war planes once again resumed bombings in Afghanistan, a country they have occupied for the last 14 years.

For Syria and Iraq, the tragedy of imperialist intervention has had no end in the last 12 years. In 2014 the U.S. and their allies began bombing Iraq, and then Syria in the name of fighting ISIS/ISIL terrorists. Since then, the role of the U.S. and their allies in creating ISIS/ISIL through their intervention and meddling in Syria and Iraq has been exposed. Today even US military officials are admitting that no progress has been made in stopping the extremist terrorist force.

In fact, the death and destruction in Iraq and Syria has only expanded. The Western fomented civil war in Syria and new bombing campaign has displaced 40% of the population of Syria, creating 12 million refugees. Four million of these refugees have fled Syria for the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq, while the

What We Have Learned from the Recent Refugee Crisis in Europe



rest remain internally displaced. On top of Western bombs and the new war on their country, the people of Iraq are also facing a U.S. strategy to divide the country. This has created more division and violence in Iraq and ever-increasing humanitarian crisis for its population, of which 8 million people are in need of basic food and water.

Extend this level of crisis to Libya and Yemen, and take into account decades of increasing military and foreign intervention by imperialist governments in Africa, and you have the cause of the refugee crisis in Europe. The new era of war and occupation is the reason that refugees are escaping into Europe in waves.

The Crisis Comes Home

As many as 3,000 people per day arrive on the Greek island of Lesbos. With a lack of adequate housing and resources, as many as 12,000 sleep on the streets as they await the paperwork that they need to pass on through Greece and then deeper into Europe. The inhuman conditions that refugees are forced to live in have created a tense and desperate situation that has evoked a brutal response from the police on the island many times. This brutality is then repeated over and over



Thousands of Refugees in front of Budapest's Keleti station

as refugees continue to flee, from the streets of Italy to train stations in Hungary and the Calais refugee camp in France.

For refugees escaping their war-torn countries, the violence that they have endured has not ended in Europe; it has only taken on a different form. Shot with tear gas and water cannons attempting to pass through ever-changing police lines and fences, or locked within stadiums awaiting their right to travel, their experience is much more like herded animals than human beings guided into a safe and normal life.

Inhumanity and arrogance have characterized the response of European government to the refugee crisis. Every time there is an international outcry for a humanitarian response, whether it is the suffocation of 71 refugees discovered in the back of a semi-truck in Austria, or the drowning of 3-year old Alan Kurdi, European governments are once again forced to respond. And what do they do? More fences, more brutal police and another "European summit," of course!

Their Response and Our Response

The latest summit resulted in an agreement to relocate 120,000 refugees in Europe, bringing the total number of refugees that they have negotiated to relocate to 160,000. This is a disgustingly low number and a completely inhuman and brutal reaction to a human crisis for which the US, Canada and their European allies are responsible. Not only have over 500,000 refugees landed in Europe just this year, but we are also now entering into the coldest and most miserable time of year.

Although European governments arrogantly claim they are doing their best, in reality they are doing nothing, especially when compared to the countries bordering Syria. Nearly 2 million refugees from Syria live in Turkey. In Lebanon, 20% percent of their population is now made up of refugees (a country 100 times smaller than Europe). Iraq, which has 3.6 million internally displaced people and is facing a new U.S. led war, has become home for 250,000 Syrian refugees. The total number of refugees that have fled to Europe in 2015 represents a tiny 0.01% of the Europe population, and suddenly the rich developed nations of Europe are claiming they don't

have the resources for refugees?

More than that – European governments are spending resources on measures that attack refugees, making their hurried and frantic journey through Europe more perilous. In Hungary, a country that is en route from Southern Europe to Germany, the government has just completed a 13 foot

high, 109 mile long fence along its border with Serbia. Crossing this razor-wire fence is punishable by 3 years in prison. Hungary has also legalized the use of the army to defend the border with "pyrotechnics, tear gas, and 'net' guns." (Reuters)

History has shown us that higher fences and tighter border controls do nothing to prevent refugees from travelling through Europe, they



Syrian Refugees detained trying to cross the Serbian-Hungarian border.

only cause more death, pain and humiliation, and force refugees to rely more and more on high cost human traffickers and the criminal underground for their passage. Hungary is only one example of many European countries with plans for new fences and increasingly militarized and violent reaction to desperate refugees.

The response from the U.S. government, the government most responsible for the new era of war and occupation has also been disgusting. In the first four years of the civil war in Syria, fomented by U.S.-led intervention

and meddling, the U.S. only accepted 200 refugees from Syria (Washington Post). In response to the refugee crisis in Europe, the U.S. government has completely avoided its responsibility in any sense, saying only that they will increase with total number of refugees admitted into the US by 20,000 in the next two years. Instead, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, has responded with racist and Islamophobic excuses for their callousness, claiming "budget constraints and vetting requirements established after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks limited the scope of the response."

As working, poor and oppressed people in Canada, it is also important for us to recognize that the hands of the Canadian government are also bloody when it comes to the refugee crisis and the new era of war and occupation. From the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, to the bombing of Iraq and Syria today, Canada has committed itself to joining in the imperialist assault on oppressed people around the globe.

During this election period all three major political parties have formulated their careful, yet completely inhuman responses. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said that the Conservatives will accept 10,000 Syrian refugees in the next year, with Jason Kenney adding that "the government must put the security of the country first." The Liberals have said that they would resettle 25,000 refugees by the end of this year, and the NDP proposes accepting 10,000 refugees this year and 46,000 in the next 4 years.

This is an immoral and bankrupt response given the responsibility that Canada has in creating the crisis, and also the capacity of Canada to accept refugees, as the second biggest country on the planet. The Conservatives say that their refugee proposal will cost \$25 million over the next two years. They have also pledged \$100 million in additional dollars in humanitarian assistance for refugees in countries surrounding Syria. These numbers pale against the modest estimate from Canada's Defence Minister Jason Kenney that Canada will have spent over \$500 million in the war on Iraq and Syria by September of next year.

However, beyond the cold calculations of





the US, Canada, the UK and the European Union, there is also the response of people around the world. As the refugee crisis in Europe has unfolded over the last few years, some people across Europe have shown concerns, but in contrast to the arrogance of European and imperialist governments, there has also sympathy and solidarity developing in working, poor and oppressed people for the hundreds of thousands of refugees escaping onto the shores of Europe. Those that plan rallies to welcome refugees into Austrian train stations, or hold "Refugees Welcome" banners in German soccer games have not bought into the xenophobic and racist lies and deceptions of Western governments and the corporate media.

In Canada, Fire This Time demands that the government of Canada immediately accept 50,000 refugees, and grant them full legal and human rights. In the next year the government of Canada must, at a minimum, accept 150,000 additional refugees. 200,000 refugees in the next year represents only one-third of one percent of the 60 million refugees in the world today. This is the least that a developed country like Canada must do.

Open the Borders Now!

The New York Times reported on a recent visit with refugees in Germany by U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry. During this

visit, "Syrians, asked by Mr. Kerry why the surge of migrants had been so great in recent weeks, said they had despaired of being able to return home and that life in refugee camps was becoming harder as food rations were cut back..." The reason people are coming now is because they gave up hope completely," one woman said."

The fight for life for refugees and people facing wars, occupation and imperialist intervention is not getting any easier. By this time next year it is estimated that there will be 4.7 million refugees attempting to get by in overcrowded camps, or slum neighborhoods in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. With no end in sight to the continued US-led bombing of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, the Saudi bombing of Yemen, and imperialist intervention in Africa, there is no doubt that refugees will continue to risk their lives to flee to Europe.

The only solution to this crisis for humanity



Refugees arrive on the shores of Greece after traveling by raft from Turkey.



Refugees crawl through the recently constructed barbed wire fence along the border of Serbia and Hungary.

is to open the borders immediately. Everyone forced to flee for their lives from the Middle East and Africa must be given a safe place to be, and granted full legal and human rights where they choose to live. Whether for the hundreds of refugees from Eritrea that travelled in an overcrowded boat to Italy, locked below the deck against their will, or the 200 children a day that arrived unaccompanied in Greece in the month of September, there is no other human

solution. In just the last two years, nearly 7,000 people, many of them unidentified, have drowned escaping through the Mediterranean for Europe (IOM). Every single one of these deaths is a needless death. If the borders are open, and the passage made safe, no more refugees have to die. For poor and working people around the world, defending refugees is our human obligation. We cannot sit idly by as our brothers and sisters uproot everything they have ever known and risk their lives to escape complete death and destruction.

As people living in Canada, we must also understand that the wars, occupations and foreign intervention that the government of Canada is complicit in are responsible for the refugee crisis and the new era of war and occupation. Opening the borders is not a long term solution to the exodus of people from the Middle East and Africa. The long-term solution is ending wars, occupations and foreign intervention committed by the US government and their allies like Canada. The destroyed lives of refugees are evidence of the atrocities and criminality committed by the governments like Canada and the United States abroad, our support for refugees is our opposition to these criminal wars and occupations.

We must unite to stop this new era of war and occupation and defending refugee rights is part of this fight!

Imperialist Hands Off the Middle East and Africa!

Open the doors to all refugees now!

Successful Forum in Vancouver Discusses the Roots of the Refugee Crisis in Europe

As of the beginning of September, 2015, the refugee crisis in Europe had made its way into the hearts and minds of people across Canada. Out of a great human feeling of support and solidarity, people across the lower mainland had been speaking out to ask how the government of Canada was going to respond to the hundreds of thousands of people escaping to Europe. However, what was missing from the dialogue was any discussion about the very roots of the refugee crisis and why so many people are fleeing their homes and countries. In response to this, on September 29, 2015 the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice organized a public forum and discussion "Humanity Denied:

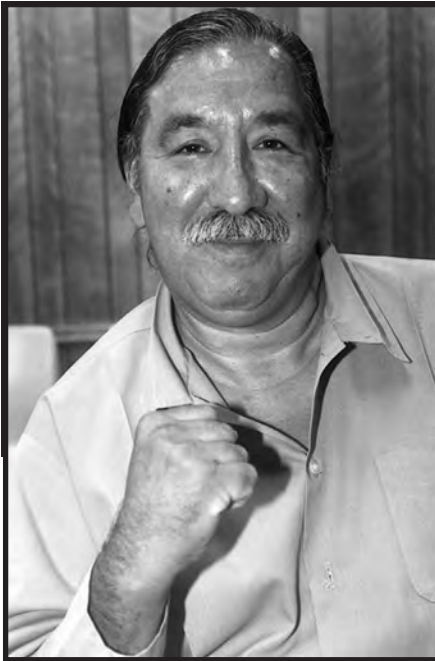
Who is to Blame for the Refugee Crisis in Europe"

At this forum, held in East Vancouver, Alison Bodine, from Fire This Time editorial board addressed this question, placing the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of imperialist governments responsible for the new era of war and occupation; governments like the U.S., U.K. and Canada. She described how U.S.-led wars, occupations and foreign interventions in the Middle East and Africa have created a situation that is completely unlivable for people in the region, who are left with no other option but to escape to Europe.

The forum also included news clips and videos about the refugee crisis. The evening concluded with a lively and impassioned discussion, which had many participants in the forum speaking about their own experiences

coming to Canada and questioning the government of Canada's lack of response to the refugee crisis. Fire This Time organizes regular public forums and discussions. Please visit the website www.firethistime.net to find out about the next one!





LEONARD PELTIER

September 12, 2015

Greetings everyone,

Well, today is another b-day for me — my 71st. I had hoped I would not be here at this age, but that's not to be. So, I have to take a deep breath and slowly let it out... and prepare myself for yet another day in here.

February 6th marks my 40th year in prison. How many of you know that when I was indicted a life sentence was 7 years? I was sentenced to 2 life sentences, so with good time I have served 6 + life sentences. I suppose all of this time has taken its toll on my body. I have a number of different health issues that come with old age. The one I'm most concerned about is my prostate.

Otherwise, I'm still getting compliments on how good I look for my age (smile). People can be nice and say things that make me feel good once in awhile. But I'm told this so often that I'm starting to believe it (smile).

Hey, did you know that the last time I went before the parole commission (2009), I was denied because I looked young and healthy... and a reason given for denying me parole was that I might be too much of an influence on the young natives? yeah, only in america.

And get this: In October 1984, when the Parole Commission was repealed by Congress, the Commission was given six years to give me a parole date... all of us "old time" prisoners really (those convicted prior to 1984). Yes, this is all true. All you have to do is research it, and I bet you will come away shocked as hell that this can happen in your country. The Parole Commission is the only Government agency that has been repealed and reinstated 35 days later without having to go through the normal congressional channels and signed into law

by the President. How does this happen in a democracy?

I've been encouraged by things I've read recently though. And looking back... It's been over 60 years, maybe a little longer. I was around 7 or 8 years old when I heard the old People talking about taking care of Mother Earth. But for me anyway, as with all young People, I did not really understand what they were trying to tell us, I guess? But I see today the traditionalists were correct and AIM People were right when we took it up as a rallying cry to the world. Still, when we spoke out against the destruction of Mother Earth, we were called a bunch of nuts. Well, today, it is called climate change, and there are now millions of us

crying out against the destruction of out Mother Earth.

Amazing, huh?

Thankfully I have lived this long and can

win this war.

I know it's not over — far from it — but the world is waking up and talking about it now. So, it can be won in our lifetime.

Well, People, I don't know how much longer I have left on Mother Earth — or if I will even be around for the next few years — but I always hope and pray that I can be out there to spend my last few remaining years with you. If not, so be it. I have been in here too long to cry now. I just wish for more time to give to my People and to all freedom loving People in the world.

Thanks again for all of the love you have shown me over these 40 years. You have all been worth it.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse...

Doksha,

Leonard Peltier

“when we spoke out against the destruction of Mother Earth, we were called a bunch of nuts”

On June 26, 2015 two FBI agents sped on to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in an unmarked car and initiated a shoot-out with American Indian Movement (AIM) activists.

When it was over, the two FBI agents, and one Native activist, Joe Stuntz, were killed. While there was never any investigation into the death of Stuntz, the FBI began the biggest 'manhunt' in US history to capture the AIM members who were involved in the firefight. Two AIM activists stood trial and were found 'not guilty' for reasons of self-defense. The FBI then put its focus on Leonard Peltier, who had fled to Canada to avoid the racist US justice system. Using manufactured evidence, the FBI had Leonard extradited from Canada to stand trial for the deaths of the agents. Despite the fact that there was never any reasonable evidence presented in the trial that linked Leonard to the deaths of the agents, and that the prosecutor conceded that "We do not know who killed the agents," in 1977 he was convicted of the two murders and sentenced to two consecutive life terms.

Leonard's real crime was standing up against the US government for Indigenous people. Today, he is 71 years old and continues to be a symbol of US injustice, but also Native pride and unwavering courage. He has continued to write and speak out from behind prison bars, and is recognized throughout the world for his life-long struggle for human rights.

The following is a letter written by Leonard on his 71st Birthday.

For more information on Leonard's case, visit: www.whoisleonardpeltier.info

hurricane katrina and New Orleans 10 Years Later: How the U.S. Government Renounced Humanity



By Nita Palmer

On August 29, 2005, a vicious Category 3 hurricane touched down in New Orleans, Louisiana. Hurricane Katrina was one of the largest disasters in US history, leaving in its wake death, destruction, and chaos. Over 1800 people were killed in the storm and its aftermath, and more than 400,000 were displaced from their homes.

An Unnecessary Tragedy

The sheer power of Katrina meant that much of the destruction was unavoidable. The storm tore apart cities and towns all along the coastline of the southern United States. However, it was the city of New Orleans which was the hardest hit. Development of the city has caused it to sink as sea levels have risen, putting much of it below sea level. Of the 1800 people who lost their lives in the storm, 1577 of them were from New Orleans. The great tragedy in New Orleans was not the destruction that the storm brought, but the fact that a large part of the destruction and loss of life could have been avoided. Scientists had been warning for years that a hurricane like Katrina would hit soon. The Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had listed a major hurricane striking New Orleans as one of the top three most likely disasters to occur in the US.

Yet nothing was done to put in place an emergency action plan, nor to repair the city's aging levees. In fact, the Bush administration cut the funding for the US Army Corps of Engineers, who were to repair the levees, by 44% between 2001 and 2005. As a result, the city's levees crumbled under the power of the storm, resulting in the flooding of 80% of the city.

No Plan in Place

As the storm drew closer, it became clear that neither city, state, nor federal authorities had any kind of comprehensive plan to evacuate people from the area. At the eleventh hour, a mandatory evacuation order was given for the city of New Orleans, but thousands remained in their homes. The media and government organizations tended to portray those who didn't evacuate as ignorant or stubborn, but many simply had no way to leave the city. Patients in hospitals and nursing homes were stranded without any plan in place to move them. No provisions were made to ensure those with disabilities were evacuated.

Many people did not have a car or could not afford a bus ticket out of the city. And many more decided to stay because they would be homeless if they left the city, without family to stay with or funds to pay for a hotel. The city's Lower 10 stadium with inadequate supplies, no sanitation facilities, and no plan in place to move them.

On the streets, people began to break into stores, taking food, water, medical supplies, baby formula – anything to survive. The response of the US government was not to send in aid, but to label these desperate people as 'looters' and send in the military – 47,000 troops in all. But the army was not there to save people. Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco warned those trying to survive in the city that, "[The soldiers] have M16s and are locked and loaded. These troops know how to shoot to kill and I expect they will."

Abandoned by the Government

The response to the disaster in the weeks and months following did not improve much. Some of those who lost their homes were put up in trailers or hotels by FEMA. For some, this was enough time to get back on their feet, find work, and rebuild or find a new home. But for many – especially the poorest residents – there was no permanent solution, and no help offered to find one. Many of the city's poorer residents had no home insurance. Others had been denied flood coverage. In addition, the government began to tear down public housing projects after Katrina – even ones which had not been damaged. Some new mixed-income housing projects were built, but they were more expensive and required stringent criminal record checks which kept many out of areas they had called home their entire lives.

Not surprisingly, New Orleans' homeless population has risen by 70% since Katrina, according to UNITY charity. In terms of

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Normalization Yes! Blockade No!

Why the Continuation of the U.S. Blockade on Cuba Prevents Normalization

By Tamara Hansen

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Headlines from around the world over the last month have proclaimed, “Raúl Castro, Obama Meet to Further Cuban Normalization Process”, “Cuba, US launch normalization process”, “Pope Francis Praises Cuba-US Normalization of Relations”, “U.S. diplomat tells pilgrims they can help normalize relations with Cuba”, “Rubio, Christie take issue with Pope Francis’ push for normalizing U.S.-Cuba relations”, “Prospects for the Cuban Internet After the Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations”, “Tennessee seen as key player in push to normalize relations with Cuba” and “US, Cuba to talk about normalizing airline service”.

We can see directly from these September 2015 news headlines that ‘normalize’, ‘normalization’ and ‘normalizing’ are the buzz words being used to explain the process after the formal reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba. The key element being that this is a process and that while Cuba and the U.S. now have embassies in each other’s capitals, this is not a “done deal” and things are not “back to normal”.

Normalize, normalization and normalizing... what does it all mean?

In his book *Modern Diplomacy* author RP Barston lays out a ten point list of “Stages of normalization”. They are: 1. Re-establishment of contact using formal or informal channels. 2. Informal exchange. 3. Low-level signaling. 4. Partial resumption of trade and financial relations. 5. Initiation or resumption of preparatory negotiations. 6. Removal of trade restrictions. 7. Policy revision. 8. Normalization negotiation on core issues. 9. Conclusion of normalization agreement. 10. Normalization implementation.

Normalization happens specifically after there has been a period of “abnormal” relations. Such is the case of Cuba and the United States. Over the past 56 years since the triumph of the Cuban revolution, and the past 54 years since the U.S. government officially broke diplomatic ties with Havana – things have been more hostile than simply “abnormal”. While author Barston noted that the stages of normalization did not have to happen in order – you can see that #6 is removal of trade restrictions – which is the main road block in the process towards real normalization between Cuba and the United States.

The noun normalization literally means “the act or process of making normal”. So is that what is happening between the U.S. and Cuba?

Are the U.S. and Cuba “normalizing” their relations?

On September 29, 2015 the Wall Street Journal published an article titled, “Raúl Castro, Obama Meet to Further Cuban Normalization Process”. The article outlines some of the discussion that took place between U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro during their 35 minute bilateral meeting at the United Nations summit. The article mentions several times that this discussion was all about how the U.S. and Cuba are embarking down this path towards “normalization”. It explains, “several thorny issues stand in the way of full normalization, including the decades-old trade and travel embargo.” We see here that the Wall Street Journal is making it clear that all parties understand that the U.S. government’s so-called “trade and travel embargo” (i.e. trade restrictions, i.e. the blockade) on Cuba is one of the big road blocks towards real normalization.

The Wall Street Journal article continues, “Mr. Obama last December announced several steps to

loosen travel
a n d

trade as part of the move to warm ties with Cuba, and then took additional actions in September, including allowing U.S. businesses to open storefronts and offices in Cuba and allowing some companies, including telecommunications firms, to form partnerships with Cuban state-owned businesses. Officials have said the administration hopes to do as much as it can before Mr. Obama leaves office to loosen the embargo. Only Congress can act to fully lift the trade and travel restrictions, but that is unlikely to happen in the Republican-controlled Congress before Mr. Obama leaves office in January 2017.” Here we see the Wall Street Journal explaining the movements of the Obama administration to try to convince Cuba that they are working towards eliminating this road block, however the Obama administration has not made all of their possible moves to undo the cruel U.S. blockade on Cuba and many people do not believe that his administration is really prioritizing the elimination of the blockade. At the same time, while I would argue the U.S. blockade on Cuba is the biggest road block on the path to normalization, it is not the only one.

Relations that are more “abnormal” than “normal”?

At the United Nations General Assembly on September 28, 2015, Cuban President Raúl Castro explained the issues that are preventing Cuba from having a normalized relationship with the United States. He explained, “After 56 years in which the Cuban people put up a heroic and selfless resistance, diplomatic relations have been re-established between Cuba and the United States of America. Now, a long and complex process begins toward the normalization that will only be achieved with the end of the economic, commercial and financial blockade; the return to our country of the territory illegally occupied by Guantanamo Naval Base; the cessation of

radio and TV broadcasts, and of subversion and destabilization programs against the Island;

and, when our people are compensated

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Vancouver Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 pose for photo after their 27th weekly protest. Sept 14, 2015

By Thomas Davies

What do Canadian Mennonite, the Afghan Association of Ontario, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, First Nations Child and Caring Society and the Sierra Club Canada Foundation all have in common? They are all organizations on a list compiled by the coalition, “Voices/Voix” that details, “more than 100 cases of individuals, organizations and public service institutions that have been muzzled, defunded, shut down or subjected to vilification” by the Conservative government of Canada. They are also currently in the process of documenting a dozen more cases. Given the Harper Conservative government’s recent imposition of Bill C-51, more popularly known as the “Secret Police Bill”, it’s clear that the coalition could be very busy in the coming years if things continue down the same path. It’s also clear that Bill C-51 is not just an isolated and misguided law, but part of an overall effort by the Conservative government to criminalize opposition to its policies as it continues to prioritize war, occupation, austerity program and corporate profits at the expense of healthcare, education and the overall living standards of poor and

working people in Canada.

Bill C-51 – Opposition Continues

“An Open Letter from Artists Against Bill C-51”, which was spearheaded by prominent author Margaret Atwood and signed by more than 200 well known artists, summarizes Bill C-51 this way, “This bill was rammed through Parliament by the Harper Conservative government, despite a huge public outcry and without due consultation. As many experts have pointed out, this bill allows the government to silence dissenting voices without oversight or accountability. It criminalizes ‘advocating or promoting the commission of terrorism offences in general,’ which, because of this vague wording, could be interpreted in some very stupid ways. In effect, it gives the government carte blanche to suppress any voice they don’t like.”

Every monthly issue of Fire This Time since Bill C-51 was introduced on January 30, 2015 has contained an article detailing both the abuses and broader implications of Bill C-51, as well as the growing movement opposing it backed by a consensus among virtually every major legal, human rights and civil liberties organization which looked at the Bill. Eight months and over 15,000

words later and there has never been a shortage of material!

Bill C-24 – Another Prong of the Attack on Our Rights

The Conservative government has continued to say it won’t abuse the vast new powers it has granted itself with Bill C-51, but there is nothing to substantiate this claim. They also passed Bill C-24 last year, which gave them the ability to revoke the Canadian citizenship of anyone convicted of terrorism who has the possibility of dual citizenship. They have wasted no time in starting the process of revoking the citizenship of 10 people. This includes Canadian-born Saad Gaya, who they claim can be deported to Pakistan despite not being a citizen of that country - because his parents emigrated from there more than 30 years ago!

Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi, Canada’s first Muslim mayor, made a simple observation, “Either you believe in the rule of law in this country, or you don’t. One Canadian citizen committing the same crime should be treated the same as any other citizen, not subject to a different sort of justice if they had a parent or grandparent born someplace else.”

BC Civil Liberties Association executive



Thorncliffe, Ontario grade 3 students made posters against Bill C51 and islamophobia

director Josh Patterson also commented, "There are now millions of Canadians whose rights are worth less than others', whose rights can be taken away more easily than others. The only distinction between them and others is where their families came from. That is the very definition of inequality. It bakes discrimination into the law; it's the very opposite of people being equal before the law." The BCCLA and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers (CARL) are launching a formal constitutional challenge of the law on the grounds that it violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Separately, Bill C-51 and Bill C-24 are dangerous enough, but together they blow the door wide open to abuse. Think about it. The Conservative government has just made the definition of terrorism so vague and so broad that basically anyone could be targeted by it, and now millions more people face the possibility of deportation if targeted in this way!

Pattern of Abuse

The Voice/Voix coalition has been so effective in documenting government abuses, that it has now been accused of "supporting a terrorist organization" by Stephen Blaney, the same Minister of Public Safety, who introduced Bill C-51. Spending time on their website (www.voices-voix.ca) one gets a sense of how consistent and ongoing the Canadian governments efforts to dismantle freedom of speech and construct walls of fear in Canada. The categories of the website include the tactics the government uses:

Charitable status attacked/revoked,
Defunding, Fired or forced resignation,
Harassment/Privacy violation, Information



Withholding, Interference with independent institutions, Surveillance, Vilification/Smearing

As well as the general categories of organizations and individuals targeted:

Aboriginal peoples, Academia, Environment, Foreign Policy, Human Rights, Immigrants and Refugees, International Development, Labour movement, Military and Veterans, National security, Palestinian Human Rights, Think tanks, Watchdogs, Women, Youth.

The onslaught has been comprehensive!

In 2012, David Suzuki, well established scientist and activist resigned from the organization bearing his name after the government began targeting non-profit organizations, especially environmental organizations critical of new resource extractions projects, for engaging in "political activity". They were all threatened that their charitable status would be revoked. The Conservatives also allocated an 8 million dollar increase to supervision of charities. Mr Suzuki released a statement at the time which said, "I want to speak freely without fear that my words will be deemed too political, and harm the organization of which I am so proud. I am keenly aware that some governments, industries and special interest groups are working hard to silence us... This bullying demonstrates how important it is to speak out."

When someone as well known as David Suzuki is forced to resign from his own organization, you know things are getting bad! Even worse is the fact that this doesn't seem to have stopped the targeting of the foundation, which has now been audited 3 times at a cost of approximately \$100,000 per audit. "There's been a huge chill across the environmental sector because of the threat. The cost of a single audit is huge, and for a lot of organizations it's almost crippling," Suzuki said in a recent interview.

The War at Home and Abroad are Always Linked

There has been no major war, occupation or threat since September 11, 2001 that Canada has not participated in. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Ukraine and Syria...the list keeps growing. The occupation of Afghanistan cost the lives of 158 soldiers and over 18 billion dollars between 2001 and 2012. Now the government is estimating that its military exploits in Iraq and Syria will cost over half a billion dollars by next year.

While the costs of war skyrocket, try this experiment: Try and find even one teacher, nurse, doctor, social worker - anyone on the frontlines of providing healthcare, education and social services in Canada - who would tell

you that they aren't facing constant cutbacks. Find even one who would say that they are provided the resources they need to be able to provide the quality of work they are capable of, and the quality of care required to build a healthy, dignified and educated society. In fact, try and find anyone in Canada who would tell you that healthcare and education are better now than 2001. They have been gutted!

Meanwhile, Canada is among the worst countries in the developed world in terms of the widening income gap between the super rich and the rest of society, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). They also went further, "The point of the whole commentary is that it is not just about income [inequality]... It is about income, yes, but it is about health, education, job opportunities. It's really about inequalities, plural," said OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría.

Trying to Divert and Divide

With one hand the Conservative government slashes social programs and attacks poor and working people, and with the other points in the other direction and distract us. They constantly associate Muslims with terrorism and impending threats against Canada. 3 people have died from terrorist attacks in Canada in the last 20 years, and they sound the red alarm and start referring to supposed "jahadi terrorist tentacles" encircling the country. They have recently proposed a new hotline for people to call in and report "Barbaric Cultural Practices" and defend women and children, but purposely ignored years of calls for an independent investigation into over 1200 missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. A woman is killed on average every six days in Canada by a current or former spouse or boyfriend, yet the Conservative government closed 12 out of 16 Status of Women Offices and mandated that the organization could not fund the work of organizations when it relates to advocacy, lobbying or general research on women's rights issues. So who is really the threat to women's rights in Canada?

We are the Majority - Let's Act Like It!

It's important to take some time and get past the hysteria and the headlines of the Conservative government and get back to the basics. Life is getting worse for the majority of people living in Canada. This is not because we are being attacked by Muslim extremists and not because we deserve to be sick or unemployed. It is getting worse because the Harper Conservative government is taking our tax dollars and pumping them into missile purchases and tax breaks for the super wealthy, while cutting everything else necessary to maintain a healthy society. It is getting worse because the Conservative government does not represent the interests of the vast majority of people living in Canada. They are fully aware of this, but want to make sure we

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The New Era of War & Occupation

SYRIA WAR

Russia exposes hypocrisy & contradictions of U.S. policy

*By Brian Becker**

Oct 01, 2015

Russia's direct military intervention into Syria has dramatically changed the dynamics of a war that has raged since 2011. The fighting during the last four years has torn this historic Arab country to shreds, made millions of Syrians into refugees, and left more than 200,000 people dead.

The stage has been set for a possible major military counteroffensive against arch-reactionary Islamic military organizations who have been gaining more and more territory.

After four years of fighting against these groups, the Syrian army has been forced into an ever smaller portion of western Syria. The Russian intervention is meant to bolster their effort, stop the retreat before the armies of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL), Al-Qaeda and others, in preparation for a military counteroffensive.

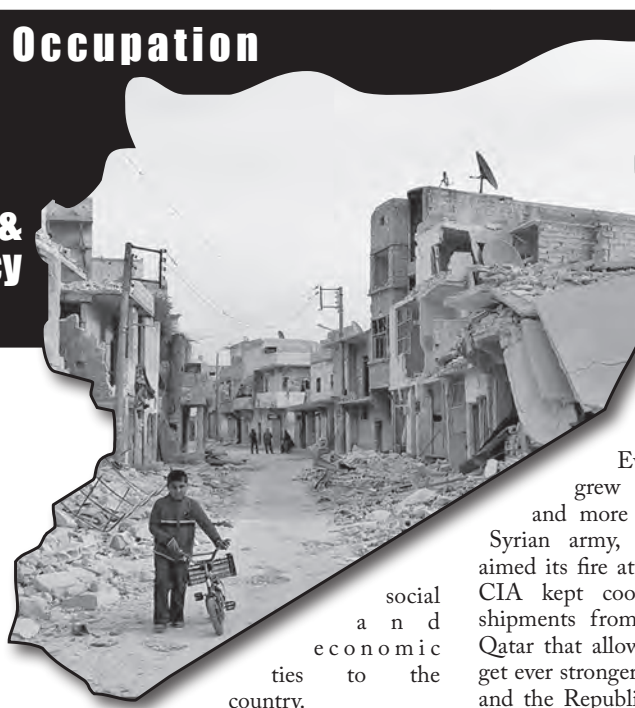
The main force preventing Syria from being completely overrun by ISIS and Al-Qaeda has been the Syrian Arab Army, the national army of the country. Between 50,000 and 85,000 Syrian soldiers have been killed in this fight already. Syrian Kurdish forces under the leadership of the People's Protection Units (YPG) have also been heroically battling against ISIS. The YPG had earlier fought against the Syrian army in an effort to create a Kurdish-ruled autonomous area in the northern part of Syria.

Now the Russian military has directly entered the battle on the side of the Syrian national army. Russia may directly give assistance to the Kurdish fighters as well. Russia's intervention was formally requested by the sovereign Syrian government led by Bashar Al-Assad and thus conforms to international law.

The stated position of the Russian government is that a long-term solution to the Syrian crisis is through political change, based on dialogue between the Baathist government and some of the opposition but not ISIS or Al Qaeda, and the retention and defense of Syria's core state institutions.

The Russia-Syria connection

Russia and before it the Soviet Union were historic allies of the secular Baathist government in Damascus, with deep military,



social
and
economic
ties to the
country.

It is critically important that progressive forces abandon the false language and political characterizations being spoon-fed to the public by the pro-imperialist media.

Assad is characterized as a "dictator" who is "killing his own people." That works for demonization purposes, but it cannot help anyone establish an informed position about the social and political character of the different forces in the Syrian war. When reading the Western news, one would think every death has been at the hands of the Syrian government. There has been almost no mention of the social base of support for the Syrian government, or the 50,000-80,000 Syrian soldiers who have died fighting sectarian armed groups, including ISIS and al-Qaeda.

The Syrian Baathist government, like the Iraqi Baathist regime, banned sectarian-based religious parties. Saddam Hussein also banned the Communist Party while establishing a secular-based social democratic economic and social program. In Syria, the Baathists worked with some Syrian leftists and repressed others.

In 2011 and 2012, the Russian government hosted meetings in Moscow of Syrian opposition groups that stood politically against Assad and demanded far-reaching political reforms from the regime but rejected foreign intervention and armed struggle. Most of these opposition groups were secular.

U.S. policy and the rise of ISIS

The United States, France, Britain and their allies in Turkey and Saudi Arabia took a different path. The United States and its NATO and regional allies have funneled weapons and money to right-wing armed sectarian groups since the Syrian civil war began in 2011. This quickly morphed into the dominance among

armed
opposition
in Syria of
the Islamic
State, Al-Qaeda
and other groups.

In its reckless effort to smash the Assad government, as it did to Qaddafi's in Libya, the Obama administration cared little about the political character of the "rebels." In so doing, they created a monster they could not control.

Even as ISIS and Al-Qaeda grew stronger and grabbed more and more territory from the besieged Syrian army, the Obama administration aimed its fire at the Syrian government. The CIA kept coordinating massive weapons shipments from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar that allowed the armed opposition to get ever stronger. In August 2013, John Kerry and the Republicans in Congress demanded the bombing of the Syrian national army and government military assets, not ISIS or the armed opposition groups.

Then in June 2014, ISIS shocked the United States by defeating the Iraqi army and seized control of Mosul, Iraq's third largest city, and much of Anbar province, and seemed to threaten U.S. assets in Iraq. In a panic, Obama suddenly changed course, sent thousands of U.S. military personnel back to Iraq and announced the open-ended bombing of ISIS positions in Syria and Iraq.

Obama announced the new military campaign against ISIS on September 10, 2014 but also reiterated that the United States would continue to work to topple the Assad government in Syria.

When he spoke to the people of the United States about the plan for "endless war" against IS in Iraq and Syria, Obama refused to tell the truth about the situation in the Middle East. He refused to acknowledge how his administration's strategy for regime change in Libya and Syria, like George W. Bush's earlier war in Iraq, were the fundamental factors that had led to the rise of ISIS and other extremist organizations in three out of the four most important secular states in the Arab world.

The feckless, reckless and shortsighted policy of the Obama administration in Syria and Libya was no less breathtaking in 2011 than had been Jimmy Carter's and Ronald Reagan's in Afghanistan in the 1980s when the CIA and Pentagon provided massive support to the "mujahadeen" fighters—among them Osama bin Laden—in a clandestine war against the socialist government that had taken power in Afghanistan. The U.S.-supported anti-communist guerrillas morphed later into Al Qaeda and the Taliban.



Failed U.S. military efforts: ISIS has been winning

Not only did U.S. interventions open the political space for the rise of ISIS in Iraq, Libya and Syria, but Obama's latest effort against ISIS has proven a miserable failure. If the goal was to "degrade and defeat ISIS" as promised, they have failed completely. ISIS is stronger. Tens of thousands of new fighters have joined ISIS in Syria during the past 12 months. Money and weapons kept pouring in. It is the Syrian army that lost ground, not ISIS.

Obama promised "no boots on the ground" in Syria. His even more right-wing and militaristic critics in Congress are also not calling for thousands of U.S. troops to go and do battle with ISIS. Public opinion in the United States will not allow another mass deployment of troops to fight and die in another Middle East war.

But from a military standpoint, the armies of ISIS and Al-Qaeda cannot be defeated by air assault. They can only be defeated by other forces on the ground.

When Russian President Putin spoke at the United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 28, he implicitly blamed the United States for creating the current crises in the Middle East by invading and destroying the secular government Iraq in 2003, militarily destroying the secular Libyan government in 2012 and fomenting civil war in Syria.

At the UN, Putin called for an international coalition to defeat ISIS, similar to the "anti-Hitler" coalition in World War that allied the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain during World War Two. He also emphasized the need to stand with the sovereign government in Syria battling ISIS, Al Qaeda and the other armed organizations.

The Obama administration immediately rejected this proposal because it included collaboration with the Syrian government. This is merely a demonstration of arrogance and hubris by representatives of the Empire. In their eyes, Assad was not supposed to survive after they declared that his government must fall. Since Obama, Kerry and Hillary Clinton declared "Assad must go," they are

now unwilling to accept responsibility for the "humiliation" of their "great power" that would be implied by entering into an open alliance with the same government they declared had "no future" in Syria.

Contradiction and hypocrisy

Obama's secretary of defense, Ashton Carter, says that Russia's efforts in Syria are "doomed to fail" because Russia believes the fight against ISIS and other terrorist forces requires support for the Assad government and the Syrian military.

But the logical contradiction lies not with the Russian position but with the one espoused by the White House. ISIS and the Al-Qaeda-led coalition, while they sometimes fight each other, are fighting the Syrian army. The only reason they have not seized the entire country is because of the battle waged by the Syrian army.

The United States says it wants to degrade and defeat ISIS, and is bombing some of the ISIS positions, but it won't send U.S. troops to defeat ISIS. It won't support the Syrian military that is actually fighting against ISIS and an array of other terrorist groups. In fact, the U.S. government is sending arms and weapons and paying the salaries of anti-Assad fighters who are then fighting alongside Al-Qaeda.

The U.S. position appears not just as a "logical contradiction" or hypocritical but downright nonsensical.

Just step back and look: Obama officials are condemning the Russian bombing because it has targeted Al-Qaeda. Russian aircraft are bombing positions of several armed opposition groups including the Nusra Front, an affiliate of Al-Qaeda, which the United States recognizes as responsible for hijacking and flying airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

The need to destroy Al-Qaeda has been the principal rationale used by the U.S. "war on terror" conducted for the past 14 years in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somali and elsewhere.

Thus, the irony is unmistakable when the Pentagon and U.S. media now denounces the Russian bombing of the Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. And the irony goes deeper. The Russian bombing has also struck CIA-funded armed groups fighting alongside Al-Qaeda.

That's right. U.S. taxpayers are paying for arms and training and salaries for armed combatants who are fighting with, and not against, Al-Qaeda. Apparently Al-Qaeda is okay as long as they kill Syrians and not Americans, and help the U.S. overthrow independent governments in the Middle East.

This seeming contradiction and weirdness in U.S. policy regarding Al-Qaeda is not exaggerated by those of us in the U.S. anti-war movement who successfully mobilized to stop Obama and Kerry's projected bombing campaign against the Syrian army that was planned in August 2013 and was only narrowly averted when Obama stepped back from the precipice at the last moment.

This is from the Oct. 1, 2015, New York Times:

"The strikes on Thursday targeted the Army of Conquest, a coalition of insurgent groups that includes the Nusra Front, the hard-line Islamist group Ahrar al-Sham and a range of less extreme Islamist groups—all of which are opposed to the Islamic State. Often fighting alongside the Army of Conquest are relatively secular groups from what is left of the loose-knit Free Syrian Army, including some that have received United States training and advanced American-made antitank missiles. At least one C.I.A.-trained group was among the targets hit on Wednesday, which drew an angry response from Washington."

John McCain himself confirmed strikes against "our Free Syrian Army or groups that have been armed and trained by the CIA, because we have communications with people there."

Stop the U.S. campaign for regime change in Syria

The position of the Russian government is that the survival of the Syrian army is indispensable for a viable political solution to emerge that could end the war in Syria and prevent the country from being fragmented. That is precisely what happened in Libya and Iraq following the imperialist-led destruction of those two countries in 2003 and 2011, when the existing state structures were shattered.

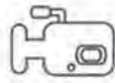
Far from being a "logical contradiction," this is fully rational. In his CBS interview with Charlie Rose on Sept. 24, Putin stated: "There is no other solution to the Syrian crisis than strengthening the effective government structures and rendering them help in fighting terrorism. But at the same time, urging them to engage in positive dialogue with the rational opposition and conduct reform. ... " As a rejoinder to U.S. policy makers who insisted that "Assad must go," he told Charlie Rose, "It's only the Syrian people who are entitled to decide who should govern their country and how."

The Syrian war has entered a new stage. The stakes are high. Russia's intervention constitutes a pledge that the entire country will not be overtaken by ISIS or Al-Qaeda.

The fact that Russia has entered the Syria fray

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ILLUSION OF CHOICE REGARDING INFORMATION SOURCES



GE
Notable Properties:
COMCAST
NBC
UNIVERSAL PICTURES
FOCUS FEATURES



NEWS-CORP
Notable Properties:
FOX
WALL STREET JOURNAL
NEW YORK POST



DISNEY
Notable Properties:
ABC
ESPN
PIXAR
MIRAMAX
MARVEL STUDIOS



VIACOM
Notable Properties:
MTV
NICK JR
BET
CMT
PARAMOUNT PICTURES



TIME WARNER
Notable Properties:
CNN
HBO
TIME
WARNER BROS



CBS
Notable Properties:
SHOWTIME
SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL
NFL.COM
JEOPARDY
60 MINUTES

By Manuel Yepe*

One of the more systematically-used arguments by the US oligarchy –widespread all over the world to defend the capitalist social system for the benefit of their interests of global domination– is the right to choose information they argue that US citizens enjoy.

Such an illusion, stimulated by the oligarchy itself, tries to ignore the strict control over the media exercised in the United States by a conglomerate of financial consortia.

Although this is carefully excluded as information from the large corporate media, it has been known that only half a dozen oligarchic conglomerates exert control over the informative, ideological and political media content in the United States.

These conglomerates are: General Electric, News Corp., Disney, Viacom, Time-Warner and CBS. Compare this phenomenon with the situation in 1983, when the media industry was represented by 50 independent media companies.

These six financial monsters own, or otherwise control, 90% of the mainstream media in the US and subsequently exert a decisive influence in all countries influenced by Washington's information policies. The names –or the segments that each one controls– may vary due to sales, mergers or similar capital operations; but the result will always be the same.

“All are corporations which have their own shady histories, dealings and suspicious actors. Disney, for example, is widely regarded as dark enterprise aimed at warping the minds of children with disturbing subliminal imagery. One of these companies is also the 12th largest US military defense contractor, so it's no surprise that so much of our entertainment centers around the glorification of war and violence,” says journalist Vic Bishop, staff writer of the Waking Times, in an article published on August 28th.

In his comment, Bishop refers to the different tactics used by US media to coerce citizen consensus towards the objectives of the oligarchy.

The promotion of shallow, materialistic, ego-centric values and the obvious oversimplification of the product for consumption by the population are in keeping with the interests of these six corporations. They glorify consumption, obedience, ignorance, the hyper-sexualization of youth, the glorification of war, government surveillance over the private lives of citizens, and so on.

The advertisers which support these media companies have tremendous sway over what makes it to the airwaves. They help control public perception.

According to Bishop, “by surveying what is available for consumption in the mass media, it is easy to see what type of society these six corporations are helping to construct. They

have the power to warp reality by calling staged programs ‘reality’ shows. Ideas which don't support mainstream narratives and the consumer agenda are omitted,” because they don't depict the society they wish to portray.

The harmfulness and danger of this ideological product lies in the fact that it is consumed daily by hundreds of millions of readers, TV viewers, radio listeners and even Internet users who are not fully aware of the problem.

Strong lobbies, foundations and groups with political or corporate power have sufficient organizational, financial and political capacity to exert pressure against media or journalists which step out of the dominant line. For most of the media it is less troublesome and more profitable to yield to this pressure than to confront these lobbies.

Add to this the fact that 80% of the international information published in the world comes from four major agencies in first world countries (AP, UPI, Reuters and AFP) which set the news agenda according to their corporate interests.

The supposed ideological plurality is even more false. They present discussions and debates which are not real because they are always held within parameters that do not affect the essential. The reader or the audience believes they are attending a discussion that shows plurality and breadth of opinions when, in fact, they are being cheated with a discussion which is maintained within a very limited space and ideological spectrum.

In his foreword to the book by Pascual Serrano *Desinformación; Cómo los medios ocultan el mundo* [Disinformation; How Media Hide the World], Ignacio Ramonet writes that in the United States, censorship works by choking, suffocation or jamming. “They provide so much information that the public does not realize that some of it (precisely that we would need the most) is not there.”

www.englishmanualeype.wordpress.com

**Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*

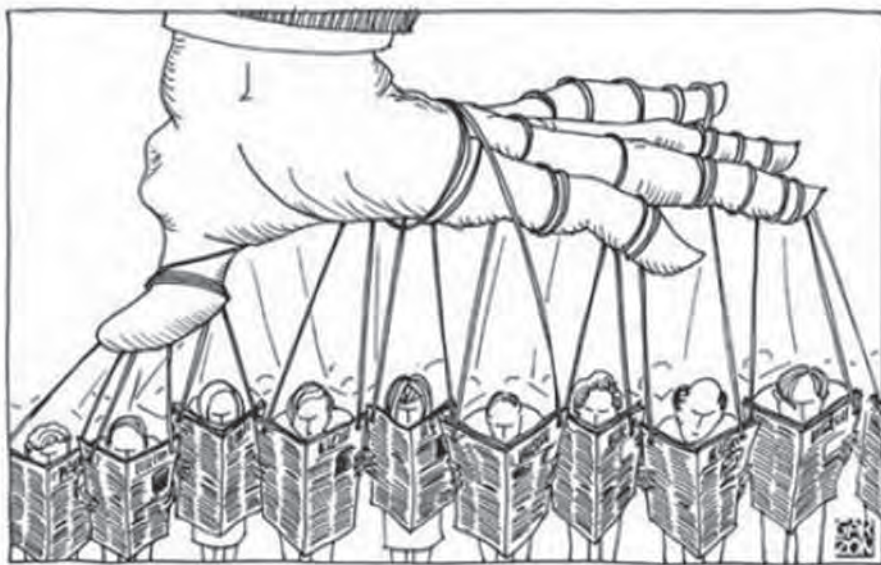
*A CubaNews translation. Edited by
Walter Lippmann.
www.walterlippmann.com*

Por Manuel Yepe*

Uno de los argumentos más sistemáticamente utilizados por la oligarquía de Estados Unidos para la defensa del sistema social capitalista que pretende expandir por el mundo en beneficio de sus intereses de dominación global es el derecho de opción informativa de que –argumentan– disfrutaban los ciudadanos norteamericanos.

Esa ilusión suscitada por la propia oligarquía pretende ignorar el riguroso control sobre los medios que en Estados Unidos ejerce un conglomerado de consorcios financieros.

LA ILUSIÓN DE ESCOGER LA FUENTE INFORMATIVA



Aunque ello es celosamente excluido como información de los grandes medios de prensa, se ha podido conocer que son apenas media docena los consorcios oligárquicos que ejercen el control del contenido informativo, ideológico y político de los medios en Estados Unidos. Son ellos: General Electric, News Corporation, CBS, Time Warner, Viacom y Disney. Compárese este fenómeno con la situación en 1983 cuando la industria de los medios estaba representada por 50 compañías mediáticas independientes.

Estos seis monstruos financieros poseen, o controlan de otra forma, el 90% de los principales medios de prensa en Estados Unidos y subsecuentemente ejercen un

ascendiente decisivo en todos los países influenciados por la política informativa de Washington. Sus nombres o las porciones que cada una controla pueden variar a causa de compraventa, fusiones u operaciones de capital semejantes, pero el resultado será siempre el mismo.

“Cada una de estas corporaciones tiene sus propias historias sombrías, relaciones y actores sospechosos. Disney es considerado una esotérica empresa destinada a deformar las mentes de los niños con inquietantes imágenes subliminales. Una de estas empresas es también la duodécima mayor contratista de la defensa militar de Estados Unidos, por lo que no es sorprendente que gran parte de nuestros productos de entretenimiento se orienten a la glorificación de la guerra y la violencia”,

Instintivamente, los anunciantes apoyan a los conglomerados empresariales que controlan los medios porque les ayudan en la percepción de la opinión pública y las mentes de sus clientes. Según Bishop, con solo observar las propuestas que presentan para el consumo del público se puede derivar qué tipo de sociedad están esos seis conglomerados ayudando a construir. Tienen incluso el poder que fabricar la realidad que ellos quieren para el futuro y la presentan en sus programas como “reality shows”. Quienes no representen las narrativas y la agenda consumista que ellos pintan, no encajan en la sociedad que ellos pretenden.

La nocividad y los peligros del producto ideológico residen en que se consume día a día por cientos de millones de lectores, televidentes, radioyentes e incluso internautas que no tienen plena conciencia de ello.

Fuertes lobbies, fundaciones y grupos de poder político o empresarial tienen suficiente capacidad organizativa, financiera y política para llevar a cabo campañas de presión contra los medios o periodistas que se salen de la línea dominante. Para la mayoría de los medios resulta menos problemático y más rentable acatar esta presión que enfrentarse a esos lobbies.

Si a esto se agrega que el 80 % de la información internacional que se publica en el mundo procede de cuatro grandes agencias de países del llamado primer mundo (AP, UPI, Reuters y AFP) que son las que fijan el orden del día de las noticias según la agenda de sus intereses corporativos.

La pluralidad ideológica es aún más falsa. Presentan polémicas y debates que no son reales porque siempre son mantenidos dentro de coordenadas que no afectan lo esencial. El lector, o la audiencia, cree estar asistiendo a una discusión que muestra pluralidad y riqueza de opiniones cuando en verdad está siendo engañado con una discusión que se mantiene en un espectro ideológico y un escenario muy limitado.

En su prólogo al libro de Pascual Serrano “Desinformación; Cómo los medios ocultan el mundo”, Ignacio Ramonet escribe que en Estados Unidos la censura funciona por atragantamiento, asfixia o atasco. “Ofrecen tanta información que el público no se da cuenta de que alguna (precisamente la que más nos haría falta) no está”.

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asegura el periodista Vic Bishop, redactor del Walking Times en un comentario aparecido el 28 de agosto en esa publicación. Bishop aborda en su comentario las distintas tácticas utilizadas por los medios estadounidenses para la siembra de consentimiento ciudadano hacia los objetivos de la oligarquía.

La promoción de valores materiales superficiales, egocéntricos y con evidente simplificación para el consumo de la población se corresponde con los intereses de estos seis grupos corporativos. Glorifican el consumo, la obediencia, la hipersexualización de la juventud, la ignorancia, la glorificación de la guerra, la vigilancia oficial en la vida privada de los ciudadanos, y así sucesivamente.

Estimado compañero:

Acabo estas notas en viaje por África, animado del deseo de cumplir, aunque tardíamente, mi promesa. Quisiera hacerlo tratando el tema del título. Creo que pudiera ser interesante para los lectores uruguayos.

Es común escuchar de boca de los voceros capitalistas, como un argumento en la lucha ideológica contra el socialismo, la afirmación de que este sistema social o el período de construcción del socialismo al que estamos nosotros abocados, se caracteriza por la abolición del individuo en aras del Estado. No pretenderé refutar esta afirmación sobre una base meramente teórica, sino establecer los hechos tal cual se viven en Cuba y agregar comentarios de índole general. Primero esbozaré a grandes rasgos la historia de nuestra lucha revolucionaria antes y después de la toma del poder.

Como es sabido, la fecha precisa en que se iniciaron las acciones revolucionarias que culminaron el primero de enero de 1959, fue el 26 de julio de 1953. Un grupo de hombres dirigidos por Fidel Castro atacó la madrugada de ese día el cuartel Moncada, en la provincia de Oriente. El ataque fue un fracaso, el fracaso se transformó en desastre y los sobrevivientes fueron a parar a la cárcel, para reiniciar, luego de ser amnistiados, la lucha revolucionaria.

Durante este proceso, en el cual solamente existían gérmenes de socialismo, el hombre era un factor fundamental. En él se confiaba, individualizado, específico, con nombre y apellido, y de su capacidad de acción dependía el triunfo o el fracaso del hecho encomendado.

Llego la etapa de la lucha guerrillera. Esta se desarrolló en dos ambientes distintos: el pueblo, masa todavía dormida a quien había que movilizar y su vanguardia, la guerrilla, motor impulsor de la movilización, generador de conciencia revolucionaria y de entusiasmo combativo. Fue esta vanguardia el agente catalizador, el que creó las condiciones subjetivas necesarias para la victoria. También en ella, en el marco del proceso de proletarización de nuestro pensamiento, de la revolución que se operaba en nuestros hábitos, en nuestras mentes, el individuo fue el factor fundamental. Cada uno de los combatientes de la Sierra Maestra que alcanzara algún grado superior en las fuerzas revolucionarias, tiene una historia de hechos notables en su haber. En base a estos lograba sus grados.

Fue la primera época heroica, en la cual se disputaban por lograr un cargo de mayor responsabilidad, de mayor peligro, sin otra satisfacción que el cumplimiento del deber. En nuestro trabajo de educación revolucionaria, volvemos a menudo sobre este tema aleccionador. En la actitud de nuestros combatientes se vislumbra al hombre del futuro.

En otras oportunidades de nuestra historia se repitió el hecho de la entrega total a la causa revolucionaria. Durante la Crisis de Octubre o en los días del ciclón Flora, vimos actos de valor y sacrificio excepcionales realizados por todo un pueblo. Encontrar la fórmula para perpetuar en la vida cotidiana esa actitud heroica, es una de nuestras tareas fundamentales desde el punto de vista ideológico.

En enero de 1959 se estableció el gobierno revolucionario con la participación en él de varios miembros de la burguesía entreguista. La presencia del Ejército Rebelde constituía la garantía de poder, como factor fundamental de fuerza.

Se produjeron enseguida contradicciones seria, resueltas, en primera instancia, en febrero del 59, cuando Fidel Castro asumió la jefatura de gobierno con el cargo de primer ministro. Culminaba el proceso en julio del mismo año, al renunciar el presidente Urrutia ante la presión de las masas.

Aparecía en la historia de la Revolución Cubana, ahora con caracteres nítidos, un personaje que se repetirá sistemáticamente: la masa.

Este ente multifacético no es, como se pretende, la suma de elementos de la misma categoría (reducidos a la misma categoría, además, por el sistema impuesto), que actúa como un manso rebaño. Es verdad que sigue sin vacilar a sus dirigentes, fundamentalmente a Fidel Castro, pero el grado en que él ha ganado esa confianza responde precisamente a la interpretación cabal de los deseos del pueblo, de sus aspiraciones, y a la lucha sincera por el cumplimiento de las promesas hechas.

La masa participó en la reforma agraria y en el difícil empeño de la administración de las empresas estatales; pasó por la experiencia heroica de Playa Girón; se forjó en las luchas contra las distintas bandas de bandidos armadas por la CIA; vivió una de las definiciones más importantes de los tiempos modernos en la Crisis de Octubre y sigue hoy trabajando en la construcción del socialismo.

Vistas las cosas desde un punto de vista superficial, pudiera parecer que tienen razón aquellos que hablan de superedición del individuo al Estado, la masa realiza con entusiasmo y disciplina sin iguales las tareas que el gobierno fija, ya sean de índole económica, cultural, de defensa, deportiva, etcétera. La iniciativa parte en general de Fidel o del alto mando de la revolución y es explicada al pueblo que la toma como suya. Otras veces, experiencias locales se toman por el partido y el gobierno para hacerlas generales, siguiendo el mismo procedimiento.

Sin embargo, el Estado se equivoca a veces. Cuando una de esas equivocaciones se produce, se nota una disminución del entusiasmo colectivo por efectos de una disminución cuantitativa de cada uno de los elementos que la forman, y el trabajo se paraliza hasta quedar reducido a magnitudes insignificantes; es el instante de rectificar. Así sucedió en marzo de 1962 ante una política sectaria impuesta al partido por Aníbal Escalante.

Es evidente que el mecanismo no basta para asegurar una sucesión de medidas sensatas y que falta una conexión más estructurada con las masas. Debemos mejorarla durante el curso de los próximos años pero, en el caso de las iniciativas surgidas de estratos superiores del gobierno utilizamos por ahora el método casi intuitivo de auscultar las reacciones generales frente a los problemas planteados.

Maestro en ello es Fidel, cuyo particular modo de integración con el pueblo solo puede apreciarse viéndolo actuar. En las grandes concentraciones públicas se observa algo así como el diálogo de dos diapasones cuyas vibraciones provocan otras nuevas en el interlocutor. Fidel y la masa comienzan a vibrar en un diálogo de intensidad creciente hasta alcanzar el climax en un final abrupto, coronado por nuestro grito de lucha y victoria.

Lo difícil de entender, para quien no viva la experiencia de la revolución, es esa estrecha unidad dialéctica existente entre el individuo y la masa, donde ambos se interrelacionan y, a su vez, la masa, como conjunto de individuos, se interrelaciona con los dirigentes.

En el capitalismo se pueden ver algunos fenómenos de este tipo cuando aparecen políticos capaces de lograr la movilización popular, pero si no se trata de un auténtico movimiento social, en cuyo caso no es plenamente lícito hablar de capitalismo, el movimiento vivirá lo que la vida de quien lo impulse o hasta el fin de las ilusiones populares, impuesto por el rigor de la sociedad capitalista. En esto, el hombre está dirigido por un frío ordenamiento que, habitualmente, escapa al dominio de la comprensión. El ejemplar humano, enajenado, tiene un invisible cordón umbilical que le liga a la sociedad en su conjunto: la ley del valor. Ella actúa en todos los aspectos de la vida, va modelando su camino y su destino.

Las leyes del capitalismo, invisibles para el común de las gentes y ciegas, actúan sobre el individuo sin que este se percate. Solo ve la amplitud de un horizonte que aparece infinito. Así lo presenta la propaganda capitalista que pretende extraer del caso Rockefeller —verídico o no—, una lección

IDEAS QUE TODO REVOLUCIONARIO DEBE SABER

El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba

★ Ernesto Che Guevara ★

como motores de la misma.

Ya no marchan completamente solos, por veredas extraviadas, hacia lejanos anhelos. Siguen a su vanguardia, constituida por el partido, por los obreros de avanzada, por los hombres de avanzada que caminan ligados a las masas y en estrecha comunión con ellas. Las vanguardias tienen su vista puesta en el futuro y en su recompensa, pero esta no se vislumbra como algo individual; el premio es la nueva sociedad donde los hombres tendrán características distintas: la sociedad del hombre comunista.

El camino es largo y lleno de dificultades. A veces, por extraviar la ruta, hay que retroceder; otras, por caminar demasiado aprisa, nos separamos de las masas; en ocasiones por hacerlo lentamente, sentimos el aliento cercano de los que nos pisan los talones. En nuestra ambición de revolucionarios, tratamos de caminar tan aprisa como sea posible, abriendo caminos, pero sabemos que tenemos que nutrirnos de la masa y que ésta solo podrá avanzar más rápido si la alentamos con nuestro ejemplo.

A pesar de la importancia dada a los estímulos morales, el hecho de que exista la división en dos grupos principales (excluyendo, claro está, a la fracción minoritaria de los que no participan, por una razón u otra en la construcción del socialismo), indica la relativa falta de desarrollo de la conciencia social. El grupo de vanguardia es ideológicamente más avanzado que la masa; esta conoce los valores nuevos, pero insuficientemente. Mientras en los primeros se produce un cambio cualitativo que le permite ir al sacrificio en su función de avanzada, los segundos sólo ven a medias y deben ser sometidos a estímulos y presiones de cierta intensidad; es la dictadura del proletariado ejerciéndose no sólo sobre la clase derrotada, sino también individualmente, sobre la clase vencedora.

Todo esto entraña, para su éxito total, la necesidad de una serie de mecanismos, las instituciones revolucionarias. En la imagen de las multitudes marchando hacia el futuro, encaja el concepto de institucionalización como el de un conjunto armónico de canales, escalones, represas, aparatos bien aceitados que permitan esa marcha, que permitan la selección natural de los destinados a caminar en la vanguardia y que adjudiquen el premio y el castigo a los que cumplen o atenten contra la sociedad en construcción.

Esta institucionalidad de la Revolución todavía no se ha logrado. Buscamos algo nuevo que permita la perfecta identificación entre el Gobierno y la comunidad en su conjunto, ajustada a las condiciones peculiares de la construcción del socialismo y huyendo al máximo de los lugares comunes de la democracia burguesa, trasplantados a la sociedad en formación (como las cámaras legislativas, por ejemplo). Se han hecho algunas experiencias dedicadas a crear paulatinamente la institucionalización de la Revolución, pero sin demasiada prisa. El freno mayor que hemos tenido ha sido el miedo a que cualquier aspecto formal nos separe de las masas y del individuo, nos haga perder de vista la última y más importante ambición revolucionaria que es ver al hombre liberado de su enajenación.

No obstante la carencia de instituciones, lo que debe superarse gradualmente, ahora las masas hacen la historia como el conjunto consciente de individuos que luchan por una misma causa. El hombre, en el socialismo, a pesar de su aparente estandarización, es más completo; a pesar de la falta del mecanismo perfecto para ello, su posibilidad de expresarse y hacerse sentir en el aparato social es infinitamente mayor.

Todavía es preciso acentuar su participación consciente, individual y colectiva, en todos los mecanismos de dirección y de producción y ligarla a la idea de la necesidad de la educación técnica e ideológica, de manera que sienta como estos procesos son estrechamente interdependientes y sus avances son paralelos. Así logrará la total conciencia de su ser social, lo que equivale a su realización plena como criatura humana, rotas todas las cadenas de la enajenación.

Esto se traducirá concretamente en la reapropiación de su naturaleza a través del trabajo liberado y la expresión de su propia condición humana a través de la cultura y el arte.

Para que se desarrolle en la primera, el trabajo debe adquirir una condición nueva; la mercancía-hombre cesa de existir y se instala un sistema que otorga una cuota por el cumplimiento del deber social. Los medios de producción pertenecen a la sociedad y la máquina es sólo la trinchera donde se cumple el deber. El hombre comienza a liberar su pensamiento del hecho enojoso que suponía la necesidad de satisfacer sus necesidades animales mediante el trabajo. Empieza a verse retratado en su obra y a comprender su magnitud humana a través del objeto creado, del trabajo realizado. Esto ya no entraña dejar una parte de su ser en forma de fuerza de trabajo vendida, que no le pertenece más, sino que significa una emanación de sí mismo, un aporte a la vida común en que se refleja; el cumplimiento de su deber social.

Hacemos todo lo posible por darle al trabajo esta nueva categoría de deber social y unirlo al desarrollo de la técnica, por un lado, lo que dará condiciones para una mayor libertad, y al trabajo voluntario por otro, basados en la apreciación marxista de que el hombre realmente alcanza su plena condición humana cuando produce sin la compulsión de la necesidad física de venderse como mercancía.

Claro que todavía hay aspectos coactivos en el trabajo, aún cuando sea necesario; el hombre no ha transformado toda la coerción que lo rodea en reflejo condicionado de naturaleza social y todavía produce, en muchos casos, bajo la presión del medio (compulsión moral, la llama Fidel). Todavía le falta el lograr la completa recreación espiritual ante su propia obra, sin la presión directa del medio social, pero ligado a él por los nuevos hábitos. Esto será el comunismo.

El cambio no se produce automáticamente en la conciencia, como no se produce tampoco en la economía. Las variaciones son lentas y no son rítmicas; hay períodos de aceleración, otros pausados e incluso, de retroceso.

Debemos considerar, además como apuntáramos antes, que no estamos frente al período de transición puro, tal como lo viera Marx en la Crítica del Programa de Gotha, sino de una nueva fase no prevista por él; primer período de transición del comunismo o de la construcción del socialismo. Este transcurre en medio de violentas luchas de clase y con elementos de capitalismo en su seno que oscurecen la comprensión cabal de su esencia.

Si a esto de agrega el escolasticismo que ha frenado el desarrollo de la filosofía marxista e impedido el tratamiento sistemático del período, cuya economía política no se ha desarrollado, debemos convenir en que todavía estamos en pañales y es preciso dedicarse a investigar todas las características primordiales del mismo antes de elaborar una teoría económica y política de mayor alcance.

La teoría que resulte dará indefectiblemente preeminencia a los dos pilares de la construcción: la formación del hombre nuevo y el desarrollo de la técnica. En ambos aspectos nos falta mucho por hacer, pero es menos excusable el atraso en cuanto a la concepción de la técnica como base fundamental, ya que aquí no se trata de avanzar a ciegas sino de seguir durante un buen tramo el camino abierto por los países más adelantados del mundo. Por ello Fidel machaca con tanta insistencia sobre la necesidad de la formación tecnológica y científica de todo nuestro pueblo y más aún, de su vanguardia.

En el campo de las ideas que conducen a actividades no productivas, es más fácil ver la

división entre la necesidad material y espiritual. Desde hace mucho tiempo el hombre trata de liberarse de la enajenación mediante la cultura y el arte. Muere diariamente las ocho y más horas en que actúa como mercancía para resucitar en su creación espiritual. pero este remedio porta los gérmenes de la misma enfermedad.. es un ser solitario el que busca comunión con la naturaleza. Defiende su individualidad oprimida por el medio y reacciona ante las ideas estéticas como un ser único cuya aspiración es permanecer immaculado.

Se trata sólo de un intento de fuga. La ley del valor no es ya un mero reflejo de las relaciones de producción; los capitalistas monopolistas la rodean de un complicado andamiaje que la convierte en una sierva dócil, aún cuando los métodos que emplean sean puramente empíricos. La superestructura impone un tipo de arte en el cual hay que educar a los artistas. Los rebeldes son dominados por la maquinaria y sólo los talentos excepcionales podrán crear su propia obra. Los restantes devienen asalariados vergonzantes o son triturados.

Se inventa la investigación artística a la que se da como definitoria de la libertad, pero esta «investigación» tiene sus límites imperceptibles hasta el momento de chocar con ellos, vale decir, de plantearse los reales problemas del hombre y su enajenación. La angustia sin sentido o el pasatiempo vulgar constituyen válvulas cómodas a la inquietud humana; se combate la idea de hacer del arte un arma de denuncia.

Si se respetan las leyes del juego se consiguen todos los honores; los que podría tener un mono al inventar piruetas. La condición es no tratar de escapar de la jaula invisible.

Cuando la Revolución tomó el poder se produjo el éxodo de los domesticados totales; los demás, revolucionarios o no, vieron un camino nuevo. La investigación artística cobró nuevo impulso. Sin embargo, las rutas estaban más o menos trazadas y el sentido del concepto fuga se escondió tras la palabra libertad. En los propios revolucionarios se mantuvo muchas veces esta actitud, reflejo del idealismo burgués en la conciencia.

En países que pasaron por un proceso similar se pretendió combatir estas tendencias con un dogmatismo exagerado. La cultura general se convirtió casi en un tabú y se proclamó el *sui generis* de la aspiración cultural, una representación formalmente exacta de la naturaleza, convirtiéndose ésta, luego, en una representación mecánica de la realidad social que se quería hacer ver; la sociedad ideal, casi sin conflictos ni contradicciones, que se buscaba crear.

El socialismo es joven y tiene errores.

Los revolucionarios carecemos, muchas veces, de los conocimientos y la audacia intelectual necesarias para encarar la tarea del desarrollo de un hombre nuevo por métodos distintos a los convencionales y los métodos convencionales sufren de la influencia de la sociedad que los creó. (Otra vez se plantea el tema de la relación entre forma y contenido.) La desorientación es grande y los problemas de la construcción material nos absorben. No hay artistas de gran autoridad que, a su vez, tengan gran autoridad revolucionaria. Los hombres del Partido deben tomar esa tarea entre las manos y buscar el logro del objetivo principal: educar al pueblo.

Se busca entonces la simplificación, lo que entiende todo el mundo, que es lo que entienden los funcionarios. Se anula la auténtica investigación artística y se reduce al problema de la cultura general a una apropiación del presente socialista y del pasado muerto (por tanto, no peligroso). Así nace el realismo socialista sobre las bases del arte del siglo pasado.

Pero el arte realista del siglo XIX, también es de clase, más puramente capitalista, quizás, que este arte decadente del siglo XX, donde se transparenta la angustia del hombre enajenado. El capitalismo en cultura ha dado todo de sí y no queda de él sino el anuncio de un cadáver maloliente en arte, su decadencia de hoy. Pero, ¿por qué pretender buscar en las formas congeladas del realismo socialista la única receta válida? No se puede oponer al realismo socialista «la libertad», porque ésta no existe todavía, no existirá hasta el completo desarrollo de la sociedad nueva; pero no se pretenda condenar a todas la formas de arte posteriores a la primer mitad del siglo XIX desde el trono pontificio del realismo a ultranza, pues se caería en un error proudhoniano de retorno al pasado, poniéndole camisa de fuerza a la expresión artística del hombre que nace y se construye hoy.

Falta el desarrollo de un mecanismo ideológico cultural que permita la investigación y desbroce la mala hierba, tan fácilmente multiplicable en el terreno abonado de la subvención estatal.

En nuestro país, el error del mecanicismo realista no se ha dado, pero sí otro signo de contrario. Y ha sido por no comprender la necesidad de la creación del hombre nuevo, que no sea el que represente las ideas del siglo XIX, pero tampoco las de nuestro siglo decadente y morboso. El hombre del siglo XXI es el que debemos crear, aunque todavía es una aspiración subjetiva y no sistematizada. Precisamente éste es uno de los puntos fundamentales de nuestro estudio y de nuestro trabajo y en la medida en que logremos éxitos concretos sobre una base teórica o, viceversa, extraigamos conclusiones teóricas de carácter amplio sobre la base de nuestra investigación concreta, habremos hecho un aporte valioso al marxismo-leninismo, a la causa de la humanidad. La reacción contra el hombre del siglo XIX nos ha traído la reincidencia en el decadentismo del siglo XX; no es un error demasiado grave, pero debemos superarlo, so pena de abrir un ancho cauce al revisionismo.

Las grandes multitudes se van desarrollando, las nuevas ideas van alcanzando adecuado ímpetu en el seno de la sociedad, las posibilidades materiales de desarrollo integral de absolutamente todos sus miembros, hacen mucho más fructífera la labor. El presente es de lucha, el futuro es nuestro.

Resumiendo, la culpabilidad de muchos de nuestros intelectuales y artistas reside en su pecado original; no son auténticamente revolucionarios. Podemos intentar injertar el olmo para que dé peras, pero simultáneamente hay que sembrar perales. Las nuevas generaciones vendrán libres del pecado original. Las posibilidades de que surjan artistas excepcionales serán tanto mayores cuanto más se haya ensanchado el campo de la cultura y la posibilidad de expresión. Nuestra tarea consiste en impedir que la generación actual, dislocada por sus conflictos, se pervierta y pervierta a las nuevas. No debemos crear asalariados dóciles al pensamiento oficial ni «becarios» que vivan al amparo del presupuesto, ejerciendo una libertad entre comillas. Ya vendrán los revolucionarios que entonen el canto del hombre nuevo con la auténtica voz del pueblo. Es un proceso que requiere tiempo.

En nuestra sociedad, juegan un papel la juventud y el Partido.

Particularmente importante es la primera, por ser la arcilla maleable con que se puede construir al hombre nuevo sin ninguna de las taras anteriores.

Ella recibe un trato acorde con nuestras ambiciones. Su educación es cada vez más completa y no olvidamos su integración al trabajo desde los primeros instantes. Nuestros becarios hacen trabajo físico en sus vacaciones o simultáneamente con el estudio. El trabajo es un premio en ciertos casos, un instrumento de educación, en otros, jamás un castigo. Una nueva generación nace.

El Partido es una organización de vanguardia.

Los mejores trabajadores son propuestos por sus compañeros para integrarlo. Este es minoritario pero de gran autoridad por la calidad de sus cuadros. Nuestra aspiración es que el Partido sea de masas, pero cuando las masas hayan alcanzado el nivel de desarrollo de la vanguardia, es decir, cuando estén educados para el comunismo. Y a esa educación va encaminado el trabajo. El Partido es el ejemplo vivo; sus cuadros deben dictar cátedras de laboriosidad y sacrificio, deben llevar, con su acción, a las masas, al fin de la tarea revolucionaria, lo que entraña años de duro bregar contra las dificultades de la construcción, los enemigos de clase, las lacras del pasado, el imperialismo...

Quisiera explicar ahora el papel que juega la personalidad, el hombre como individuo de las masas que hacen la historia. Es nuestra experiencia no una receta.

Fidel dio a la Revolución el impulso en los primeros años, la dirección, la tónica siempre, pero hay un buen grupo de revolucionarios que se desarrollan en el mismo sentido que el dirigente máximo y una gran masa que sigue a sus dirigente porque les tiene fe; y les tiene fe, porque ellos han sabido interpretar sus anhelos.

No se trata de cuántos kilogramos de carne se come o de cuántas veces por año se pueda ir alguien a pasearse en la playa, ni de cuántas bellezas que vienen del exterior puedan comprarse con los salarios actuales. Se trata, precisamente, de que el individuo se sienta más pleno, con mucha más riqueza interior y con mucha más responsabilidad. El individuo de nuestro país sabe que la época gloriosa que le toca vivir es de sacrificio; conoce el sacrificio. Los primeros lo conocieron en la Sierra Maestra y dondequiera que se luchó; después lo hemos conocido en toda Cuba. Cuba es la vanguardia de América y debe hacer sacrificios porque ocupa el lugar de avanzada, porque indica a las masas de América Latina el camino de la libertad plena.

Dentro del país, los dirigentes tienen que cumplir su papel de vanguardia; y, hay que decirlo con toda sinceridad, en una revolución verdadera a la que se le da todo, de la cual no se espera ninguna retribución material, la tarea del revolucionario de vanguardia es a la vez magnífica y angustiosa.

Déjeme decirle, a riesgo de parecer ridículo, que el revolucionario verdadero está guiado por grandes sentimientos de amor. Es imposible pensar en un revolucionario auténtico sin esta cualidad. Quizás sea uno de los grandes dramas del dirigente; éste debe unir a un espíritu apasionado una mente fría y tomar decisiones dolorosas son que se contraiga un músculo. Nuestros revolucionarios de vanguardia tienen que idealizar ese amor a los pueblos, a las causas más sagradas y hacerlo único, indivisible. No pueden descender con su pequeña dosis de cariño cotidiano hacia los lugares donde el hombre común lo ejercita.

Los dirigentes de la Revolución tienen hijos que en sus primeros balbuceos, no aprenden a nombrar al padre; mujeres que deben ser parte del sacrificio general de su vida para llevar la Revolución a su destino; el marco de los amigos responde estrictamente al marco de los compañeros de Revolución. No hay vida fuera de ella.

En esas condiciones, hay que tener una gran dosis de humanidad, una gran dosis de sentido de la justicia y de la verdad para no caer en extremos dogmáticos, en escolasticismos fríos, en aislamiento de las masas. Todos los días hay que luchar porque ese amor a la humanidad viviente se transforme en hechos concretos, en actos que sirvan de ejemplo, de movilización.

El revolucionario, motor ideológico de la revolución dentro de su partido, se consume en esa actividad ininterrompida que no tiene más fin que la muerte, a menos que la construcción se logre en escala mundial. Si su afán de revolucionario se embota cuando las tareas más apremiantes se ven realizadas a escala loca y se olvida el internacionalismo proletario, la revolución que dirige deja de ser una fuerza impulsora y se sume en una cómoda modorra, aprovechada por nuestros enemigos irreconciliables, el imperialismo, que gana terreno. El internacionalismo proletario es un deber pero también es una necesidad revolucionaria. Así educamos a nuestro pueblo.

Claro que hay peligros presentes en las actuales circunstancias. No sólo el del dogmatismo, no sólo el de congelar las relaciones con las masas en medio de la gran tarea; también existe el peligro de las debilidades en que se puede caer. Si un hombre piensa que, para dedicar su vida entera a la revolución, no puede distraer su mente por la preocupación de que a un hijo le falte determinado producto, que los zapatos de los niños estén rotos, que su familia carezca de determinado bien necesario, bajo este razonamiento deja infiltrarse los gérmenes de la futura corrupción.

En nuestro caso, hemos mantenido que nuestros hijos deben tener y carecer de lo que tienen y de lo que carecen los hijos del hombre común; y nuestra familia debe comprenderlo y luchar por ello. La revolución se hace a través del hombre, pero el hombre tiene que forjar día a día su espíritu revolucionario.

Así vamos marchando. A la cabeza de la inmensa columna —no nos avergüenza ni nos intimida decirlo— va Fidel, después, los mejores cuadros del Partido, e inmediatamente, tan cerca que se siente su enorme fuerza, va el pueblo en su conjunto sólida armazón de individualidades que caminan hacia un fin común; individuos que han alcanzado la conciencia de lo que es necesario hacer; hombres que luchan por salir del reino de la necesidad y entrar al de la libertad.

Esa inmensa muchedumbre se ordena; su orden responde a la conciencia de la necesidad del mismo ya no es fuerza dispersa, divisible en miles de fracciones disparadas al espacio como fragmentos de granada, tratando de alcanzar por cualquier medio, en lucha reñida con sus iguales, una posición, algo que permita apoyo frente al futuro incierto.

Sabemos que hay sacrificios delante nuestro y que debemos pagar un precio por el hecho heroico de constituir una vanguardia como nación. Nosotros, dirigentes, sabemos que tenemos que pagar un precio por tener derecho a decir que estamos a la cabeza del pueblo que está a la cabeza de América. Todos y cada uno de nosotros paga puntualmente su cuota de sacrificio, conscientes de recibir el premio en la satisfacción del deber cumplido, conscientes de avanzar con todos hacia el hombre nuevo que se vislumbra en el horizonte.

Permítame intentar unas conclusiones: Nosotros, socialistas, somos más libres porque somos más plenos; somos más plenos por ser más libres.

El esqueleto de nuestra libertad completa está formado, falta la sustancia proteica y el ropaje; los crearemos.

Nuestra libertad y su sostén cotidiano tienen color de sangre y están henchidos de sacrificio.

Nuestro sacrificio es consciente; cuota para pagar la libertad que construimos.

El camino es largo y desconocido en parte; conocemos nuestras limitaciones. Haremos el hombre del siglo XXI: nosotros mismos.

Nos forjaremos en la acción cotidiana, creando un hombre nuevo con una nueva técnica.

La personalidad juega el papel de movilización y dirección en cuanto que encarna las más altas virtudes y aspiraciones del pueblo y no se separa de la ruta.

Quien abre el camino es el grupo de vanguardia, los mejores entre los buenos, el Partido.

La arcilla fundamental de nuestra obra es la juventud, en ella depositamos nuestra esperanza y la preparamos para tomar de nuestras manos la bandera.

Si esta carta balbuceante aclara algo, ha cumplido el objetivo con que la mando.

Reciba nuestro saludo ritual, como un apretón de manos o un «Ave María Purísima»:

Patria o muerte.



British Columbia, Canada

Our Mother Earth

By Thomas Davies

"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together ... all things connect." - Chief Seattle

Climate Change. Global Warming. Holes in the Ozone. The Big Melt. Methane Release. CO2 Emissions. Peak Oil. Carbon Tax. Climate Refugees. Acidification. Deforestation. Desertification. Extreme Weather. El Niño. Kyoto Accord. Copenhagen Summit...It can be difficult to approach what's going on with the environment of planet earth without getting overwhelmed. The bottom line is this: Human caused changes to the balance of nature are increasing, and are having such negative impacts we are in danger of damaging the balance of life enough to make the planet uninhabitable sooner rather later. This catastrophe is unnecessary, but the big business polluters who are responsible for pushing us towards this scenario take advantage of our confusion and inaction. The vast majority of scientists agree that climate change is a global emergency, but the good news is you don't have to be a scientist to understand enough about the issue to become part of the growing global movement proposing and demanding the necessary changes to save the environment and humanity at the same time.

The Climate Crisis

Severe and unheard of weather disasters from this summer alone are evidence that something is going terribly wrong with the environment. 99.84% of the land in California is experience drought. Massive heatwaves in Pakistan and India killed more than 3000 people. Puerto Rico went through its strictest water rationing in history. More than 100,000 people were ordered to leave their homes in Japan as torrential rains from Typhoon Etai wreaked havoc. The examples of increasingly drastic and uncontrollable weather changes are endless.

On a broader scale, 2015 is set to beat 2014 as the hottest year on record. The rate of droughts, floods and storms is five times higher now than the 1970s. Glacier National

Park in Montana now only has 25 glaciers left from 150 present in the year 1910. The Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets are melting and the extent and thickness of the Arctic sea ice is decreasing. Global sea level rose about 17 centimeters (6.7 inches) in the last century. The rate in the last decade, however, is nearly double of the entire century before. 27% of the world's coral reefs have been lost to "bleaching" from increasing water temperatures. If present rates of destruction are allowed to continue, 60% of the world's coral reefs will be destroyed over the next 30 years. Everything is connected, and it's not difficult to see the growing chain reaction of climate catastrophes wreaking havoc on the earth.

Of course there are human consequences to all of this as well. With continental interiors drying out, the chief scientist at the U. S. State Department in 2009 predicted a billion people will suffer famine within twenty or thirty years. The International Red Cross estimates that there are more environmental refugees than political refugees fleeing from wars and other conflicts. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says 36 million people were displaced by natural disasters in 2009, the last year such a report was taken. Scientists predict this number could rise to 200 million by 2050.

Rising sea levels jeopardize life for millions of coastal populations. Half the population of Bangladesh lives less than 5 meters (16.5 feet) above sea level. In 1995, Bangladesh's

Bhola Island was half-submerged by rising sea levels, leaving 500,000 people homeless. Conservative scientific estimates predict Bangladesh will lose 17 percent of its land by 2050 due to flooding caused by climate change. The could create 20 million climate refugees in Bangladesh alone.

What the Scientists Say - Why's it's Human-Made

"One can see from space how the human race has changed the Earth. Nearly all of the available land has been cleared of forest and is now used for agriculture or urban development. The polar icecaps are shrinking and the desert areas are increasing. At night, the Earth is no longer dark, but large areas are lit up. All of this is evidence that human exploitation of the planet is reaching a critical limit. But human demands and expectations are ever-increasing. We cannot continue to pollute the atmosphere, poison the ocean and exhaust the land. There isn't any more available."

- Stephen Hawking, renowned scientist (2007)

While there a few, mostly well funded, scientists who argue that everything we've just described is either exaggerated or part of the normal climate cycles of planet earth. However, NASA states that "Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities, and most of the leading scientific organizations worldwide have issued public statements endorsing this position."

A lot of climate change is caused because of human caused carbon emissions. The David Suzuki Foundation explains this phenomenon:

"- Life on Earth is possible because of the warmth of the sun. While some of this incoming solar radiation bounces back into space, a small portion of it is trapped by the delicate balance of gases that make up our atmosphere. Without this layer of insulation, Earth would simply be another frozen rock hurtling through space. Carbon dioxide (CO2) is the most important gas in this layer of insulation.

- Carbon is stored all over the planet — in plants, soil, the ocean, and even us. We release it into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide

& Climate Change



Tar Sands, Alberta, Canada

through activities such as burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) and cutting down trees. As a result, today's atmosphere contains 42 per cent more carbon dioxide than it did before the industrial era.

- We have released so much carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that our planet's atmosphere is now like a thick, heat-trapping blanket. By disrupting the atmospheric balance that keeps the climate stable, we are now seeing extreme effects around the globe..."

Worldwide, since 1880 the average surface temperature has gone up by at least 0.8 °C. The current mainstream scientific consensus is that a rise of more the 2°C would mean that catastrophic climate change would be inevitable. But a new draft study being published by a team of 17 leading international climate scientists warns that even 2 degrees of warming is "highly dangerous" and could cause sea level rise of "at least several meters" this century, leaving most of the world's coastal cities uninhabitable. Unfortunately, NASA estimates that, "In the absence of major action to reduce emissions, global temperature is on track to rise by an average of 6°C (10.8°F)"

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the acidity of surface ocean waters has increased by about 30 percent. This increase is also the result of humans emitting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and hence more being absorbed into the oceans. According to Scientific American, "Estimates of future carbon dioxide levels, based on business as usual emission scenarios, indicate that by the end of this century the surface waters of the ocean could be nearly 150 percent more acidic, resulting in a pH that the oceans haven't experienced for more than 20 million years." This will destroy the entire marine life balance in ways which are difficult to even comprehend.

Another big concern is the thaw of Arctic permafrost which contains vast quantities of CO₂ as well as methane, which traps heat over 20 times more effectively than CO₂. This would create what scientists call a "positive feedback" as more global warming would cause more thawing of Arctic permafrost, leading to more emissions of carbon and methane into the atmosphere, leading to more warming and more thawing of Arctic permafrost. This leads to doomsday scenario called, "Abrupt Climate Change".

There are countless other examples of other human caused environmental concerns which fill entire books and scientific journals: the unchecked hyper-resource extraction projects in mining, LNG and gas drilling and hydraulic fracking, holes in the ozone layer from the use of dangerous chemicals, massive deforestation, mountains of garbage...it really is impossible to deny that humans need to change the way our societies are organized in monumental ways.



Peoples Climate March in New York. Sept. 2014

But where to start?

Latin-American Shows the Way

"Stopping climate change cannot be left to those who profit from the destruction of nature. That is why we the peoples must directly accept our own responsibility for the continuation of life and society by taking control of governments, and using that power to pressure and force government and businesses alike to take drastic and immediate measures to stop us from falling into this abyss of nature's destruction."

- Bolivian President Evo Morales

Humanity is at an pivotal time. We live on a planet which has more than enough resources to provide for everyone who lives on it. Humans have also developed technologically so incredibly that we have all of the resources available to ensure that everyone has everything they need. Yet we live in a world where the majority go hungry, war and occupation dominate the political landscape and the environment is being rapidly destroyed. As long as the primary driver of society remains profit and not people, this will continue as all other considerations are thrown into the ever growing garbage heap. Climate change is the symptom, capitalism is the problem.

Revolutionary Socialist Cuba Shows the Way

Cuba has been leading the way for many years now. A World Wildlife Fund study concluded Cuba is the only country in the world with both a high UN Human Development Index and a relatively small "ecological footprint". The study concluded that if the world followed Cuba's example we'd only need the resources of one Earth to sustain us indefinitely. This is truly amazing for a country that inhabits only 11.5 million people.

Now across, Latin-America, Cuba is joined by countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador which are emphasizing the creation of societies and economies based on social justice and respect for the humanity and environment. They are creating their own regional organizations such as ALBA (The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) which directly challenge the United States and their big business friends. They do this

by emphasizing cooperation and exchange based on mutual respect. The results have been incredible, both for people and the environment.

President Evo Morales has also proposed a Global Referendum on Climate Change with 5 simple questions which get to the fundamentals of climate change. Enacting this referendum worldwide would be a game changer for the climate justice movement.

The Global Referendum on Climate Change questions are:

1. Do you agree with re-establishing harmony with nature while recognizing the rights of Mother Earth?
2. Do you agree with changing this model of over-consumption and waste that the capitalist system represents?
3. Do you agree that developed countries reduce and re-absorb their domestic greenhouse gas emissions so that the temperature does not rise more than 1 degree Celsius?
4. Do you agree with transferring all that is spent in wars to protecting the planet and allocate a budget for climate change that is bigger than what is used for defense?
5. Do you agree with a Climate Justice Tribunal to judge those who destroy Mother Earth?

The Solution is International

Large climate justice movements have also been growing around the world. The largest climate march in history happened in New York on September 21 of last year, with over 400,000 people joining the "Peoples Climate March" and over 270,000 more participating in 2000 coordinated actions in 166 countries across the globe. The actions coincided with the UN Climate Summit. The movement lives on and will join forces again on November 29, with similar actions being called around the UN Climate Summit in Paris. The stated goal is to break last year's record of the largest climate change rally in history and "for the entire world, for the first time, to agree to the goal of a decarbonised global economy powered by clean energy."

Ultimately climate change is a global problem

continued on page 28



Speech by

Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz

*during 70th Session of the
UN General Assembly*

September 28, 2015

(Council of State transcript / GI translation)

Esteemed heads of state and government,
Distinguished heads of delegations,

Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,

Mr. President,

Seventy years ago, on behalf of their peoples, the member states of this organization signed the United Nations Charter. We pledged to protect future generations from the scourge of war, and to build a new type of relationship guided by a set of principles and purposes that could bring about an era of peace, justice and development for all of humanity.

However, since then, there have been constant wars of aggression; interference in the internal affairs of states; violent overthrowing of sovereign governments; so-called “soft coups,” and the re-colonization of territories. All of these perfected with non-conventional strategies and new technology, under the guise of alleged human rights violations.

The militarization of cyberspace, and the covert and illegal use of information and communications technologies to attack other states is unacceptable, as likewise is the distortion of the advancement and protection of human rights used with a selective and discriminatory approach to justify and impose political decisions.

Despite the fact that the Charter calls to “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person,” to millions of people the fulfillment of human rights remains a utopia.

Humanity is denied the right to live in peace, and the right to development. It is in poverty and inequality where the cause of conflicts should be sought; conflicts generated first by colonialism and the plundering of original peoples, and later by imperialism and the distribution of spheres of influence.

The pledge made in 1945 “to promote social progress and better standards of living” for the peoples, along with their economic and social development, remains an illusion when 795 million people go hungry, 781 million adults are illiterate, and 17,000 children perish every day from curable diseases, while annual military spending worldwide amounts to more than 1.7 trillion dollars. A mere fraction of that figure could resolve the most pressing problems afflicting humanity.

Even in industrialized nations, the “welfare society”, usually presented as the model to imitate, has practically disappeared. The election systems and traditional parties that rely on money and publicity, are growing increasingly detached and distant from the aspirations of their peoples.

Climate change is threatening the very existence of the human species, and states must assume common but differentiated responsibility for this, in light of the indisputable reality that not every country is equally accountable, and not all of us waste natural and human resources to irrational and unsustainable consumerism.

The consequences of climate change have a particularly devastating effect on small island nations and bring additional tension to bear on their fragile economies. And, the same is happening in Africa with the relentless advance of desertification.

We stand in solidarity with our Caribbean

brothers, and demand that they are treated in a special and differentiated way. We also support African countries and demand fair treatment for them, as well as the transfer of technology and financial resources.

Mr. President,

The establishment of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and especially the signing by the heads of state and government in January 2014 of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Peace Zone, shows that we can move beyond our differences toward unity, and the achievement of common goals while respecting our diversity.

“The international community can always count on Cuba to lift its sincere voice against injustice”

In the Proclamation, we reaffirm our steadfast commitment to the principles established in the United Nations Charter and in international law to settle disputes by peaceful

means, and our belief that full respect for the inalienable right of every state to choose its own political, economic, social and cultural system is an essential premise to ensure peaceful coexistence between nations. We advocate adherence to these principles by other states in their relations with our region.

We reaffirm our full solidarity with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela regarding attempts to destabilize and subvert its constitutional order, and destroy of the work undertaken by President Hugo Chávez Frías and continued by President

Nicolás Maduro Moros for the benefit of the Venezuelan people.

Likewise, our firm and unlimited solidarity goes to the Republic of Ecuador, its Citizens' Revolution and leader, Rafael Correa, who has become the target of the same destabilization strategy used against other progressive governments in the region.

We stand in solidarity with the Caribbean nations demanding fair reparation for the horrors of slavery and the slave trade, in a world where racial discrimination and repression against communities of African descendants have increased.

We reaffirm our conviction that the people of Puerto Rico deserves to be free and independent, after more than a century of colonial domination.

We stand in solidarity with the Republic of Argentina in its fair claim of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands.

We reiterate our support to and solidarity with President Dilma Rouseff and the Brazilian people in the defense of social achievements and the stability of the country.

We reaffirm our rejection of the intention to expand the presence of NATO up to the Russian borders, as well as of the unilateral and unfair sanctions imposed on that nation.

We welcome the so-called nuclear agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which shows that engagement and negotiation are the only effective tools to settle disputes between states.

We restate our confidence that the Syrian people are capable of resolving their own disputes, and demand the end of external interference.

A fair and lasting solution in the Middle East conflict unquestionably requires the true exercise, by the Palestinian people, of its inalienable right to build their own state within the borders existing prior to 1967, and its capital in East Jerusalem, which we strongly support.

For the past few weeks we have been moved by images of waves of migrants arriving in Europe, a direct result of the destabilization promoted and executed by NATO in countries of the Middle East and North Africa, and of poverty and underdevelopment prevailing in countries

of the African continent. The European Union must take full and immediate responsibility for the human crisis that it helped generate.

Mr. President,

After 56 years, during which the Cuban people put up a heroic and selfless resistance, diplomatic relations have been reestablished between Cuba and the United States of America.



Now, a long and complex process begins toward normalization that will only be achieved with the end of the economic, commercial and financial blockade; the return to our country of the territory illegally occupied by the Guantanamo Naval Base; the suspension of radio and TV broadcasts, and subversion and destabilization attempts against the Island; and, when our people are compensated for the human and economic damages they continue to endure.

As long as the blockade remains in force, we will continue to introduce the Draft Resolution entitled "Necessity of Ending the Economic, Commercial and Financial Embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba."

To the 188 governments and peoples who have backed our just demand, here, and in other international and regional forums, I reaffirm the eternal gratitude of the Cuban people and government for your continued support.

Mr. President,

Cuba is celebrating the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Organization with profound commitment. We acknowledge that efforts have been made throughout these years, although not enough has been done, to save present and future generations from the scourge of war, and to protect their right to sustainable development, without exclusion. The United Nations must be saved from unilateral action, and deeply reformed to democratize and bring it closer to the

people.

As Comrade Fidel Castro Ruz, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, stated in this same hall fifteen years ago: "Anyone can understand that the fundamental objective of the United Nations, in this critical century that is just beginning, is to save the world not only from war but also from underdevelopment, hunger, diseases, poverty and the destruction of the natural resources indispensable to human existence. And it should do it soon before it is too late!"

The international community can always count on Cuba to lift its sincere voice against injustice, inequality, underdevelopment, discrimination and manipulation; and for the establishment of a more equitable and fair international order, truly focused on human beings, their dignity and well-being.

Thank you.

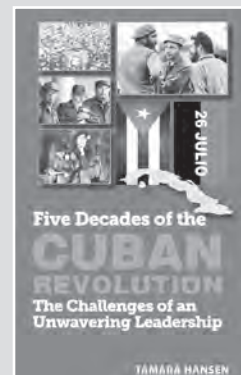
Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

By Tamara Hansen

"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'"

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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Reestablishing & Normalizing US/Cuba Relations: The Necessity of Lifting the US Blockade on Cuba

By Nino Pagliccia

Transcribed by Janine Solanki,

Fire This Time editorial board

Final edit by Nino Pagliccia

On Thursday, September 17, 2015 Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) organized a public community forum & discussion titled, "Reestablishing U.S./Cuba Relations & the Necessity of Lifting the U.S. Blockade on Cuba". This forum was held exactly 9 months after the December 17, 2014 announcement by US president Barack Obama and Cuban president Raul Castro that the US and Cuba would be reestablishing diplomatic ties after 54 years of broken relations. The community forum also took place during an international period of action where groups across Canada, the US and around the world were campaigning to bring an end to the continued U.S. blockade against Cuba, September 15-19, 2015.

Below are excerpts from a talk by Nino Pagliccia, one of the speakers at the forum. Nino is a long time Cuba solidarity activist in Canada and editor of the new book "Cuba Solidarity in Canada: 5 Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations" (Friesen Press, 2014).



It's a Cruel Situation that the Blockade is Still Here and Has Been Here for 54 Years!

Thank you everyone for being here. I feel really honored to be invited to speak about Cuba. I'm always happy to talk about Cuba as much as I can, as much as I know. was also happy to be today at the picket in front of the U.S. consulate and I was thinking that if this new group, Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade of Cuba, is as successful as the previous Free the Cuban 5 Committee, that has freed the Cuban 5, or at least contributed, I think soon the blockade will end.

The blockade is 54 years old. That's how old it is, much older than many of you in here probably. About half of the time, or the last half of those 54 years, Cuba has introduced resolutions at the UN assembly, asking for a vote on the need to end the U.S. blockade of Cuba. Twenty three times, the majority of the countries of the world at the UN assembly have voted against the U.S. blockade. So I think it's kind of a cruel situation where you have most of the countries agree that something is not right, and yet the blockade is still there and has been there for 54 years.

Now this year, 2015, Cuba will introduce again a resolution to the UN on the need to end the blockade of Cuba. [...] But this time, it's particularly interesting because it's the first year that this resolution is going to be introduced by Cuba after December 17, 2014. That is, after the reestablishment of

diplomatic relationships between the U.S. and Cuba. [...]

...the blockade is not a sexy topic, so I think we'll have to bear with it. But as I said before, I think it's important to be informed. [...] The whole report has five parts, but the most important part is the first part, because that is titled, "Continuity of the Blockade Policy. That's the part we want to talk about tonight.

Now the first thing that I want to mention is the complexity of the blockade against Cuba. It is extremely complex because it is not one single piece of legislation that the U.S. government has put out saying, ok now we have a blockade, this is what it means and that's it. I think that it's much more complex than that, and in fact, 10 different pieces of legislation that deal with different aspects of the blockade against Cuba in increasing progression. And that's important to know.

Some of the legislation goes back to 1961, some of which you've seen in [previous] video clips, and then 1963 again, and then it goes to the Torricelli Act of 1992. We're more familiar with that, I think we've heard that several times, that's a strong one. The Helms-Burton Act of 1996, signed by Hillary's husband. And there is one that is quite interesting; it's called Trading with the Enemy Act. Now this is a legislation from 1917, this is way before the blockade of Cuba as we know it. But it's important to mention that because that is also part of contributing to what we know nowadays as the blockade against Cuba. [...]

The other aspect that we need to be aware of

that's covered here in the resolution is, what Obama has done since December 17, 2014. Ok, nine months have gone by, what has happened that is new? Ok, the US government has relaxed some travel restrictions to Cuba. But this is only for some, moving it from 12 different cases, so to speak, to a general license, but people still need to get a license, in order to travel to Cuba. Also, this relaxation on travel does not cover tourism. So U.S. tourists still cannot travel to Cuba. [...]

There has been some exports [to Cuba] in the area of telecommunications that have been relaxed by the U.S. government. Now, it's interesting because everything related to telecommunications has been quite comprehensive, in fact it covers products, telecommunications services, and supplies for infrastructure, buildings and what not, that are related to telecommunications that is allowed. So there has been a relaxation for that. But of course we need to ask, why is there such a particular interest by the U.S. to be so open about telecommunications but not about other things? Well, I'm not trying to answer that question but I think it becomes quite obvious that there is a particular interest in being able to engage, and I think that is the word the U.S. government uses, "engaging Cubans". And what an easy way to do it, especially engaging young people, by freeing some of the telecommunications, internet, and what not in Cuba. So, that's another thing that has been sort of opened.

In terms of commerce, it's very interesting

because commerce and finances are not totally open. The relaxation of commerce has been done only, notice only, for non-state entities. [...] The U.S. will only import products from non-state entities in Cuba. The U.S. government, basically what it is saying is, we don't want anything to do with the Cuban state. And yet they open diplomatic relations, which are state to state kind of interactions, relationships. But they don't want anything to do with the Cuban state. Now, this is very crucial [because the U.S.] cannot import Cuban tobacco and rum, nickel, biotechnology products and medical services. These are very important sectors. Cuba relies on these sectors. [...]

Now, quickly, I want to cover two more things. What the US president can do and cannot do now. Ok, now that is very important, because that will tell us two things, well one thing mainly. That the U.S. president, Obama specifically, still has some power, that's what we're saying, that's why he signed the legislation, against trading with the enemy act; because that gives him power to change things. So let's see, what is it that he could change? But not quite yet. For instance, Obama can authorize the use of U.S. dollars in Cuba's international transactions. Cuba still cannot use U.S. dollars. It's forbidden from using, it's not recognized as being able to trade with U.S. dollars internationally. Obama can change that, he has not done it yet, and we don't know when he's going to do it. Obama can consent that these transactions be carried out through the U.S. banking system. Well as I said before, Cuba still doesn't have

access to the U.S. banking system, so Obama could change that.

Yes, I think in that case Cuba could open accounts in the U.S. Cuba does not have access to grants or loans from international banks or from U.S. banks. Now Obama could relax that part of the blockade. If Cuba could have access to loans they could do quite a bit in terms of trade and commerce. And Cuba needs to do that, but cannot do it. Other things, authorize Cuban aircraft and ships to transport travelers and whatnot, to authorize direct exports of U.S. products to Cuba, to allow imports into the U.S. of Cuban services or products, which as I mentioned before Cuba cannot do. Whereas Obama could relax that part of the legislation. To authorize U.S. firms to make investments in Cuba, and so on and so forth, and there are a few more. So these are things, and there is a list of 13 different items, where Obama has a direct way of changing that. He has the powers to do that. But of course he has not done it.

On the other hand, what is it that Obama cannot do, and this is also important to know. Obama cannot undo aspects of the Torricelli law, such as allow U.S. subsidiaries in third countries from trading products with Cuba. That's under the Torricelli law, so that cannot be done. Aspects of the Helms-Burton law, the extra-territorial aspect of the Helms-Burton law, Obama cannot change that, that's up to the congress. Now what is the likelihood of a republican congress to change that? Let's keep that in the back of our minds, but let's not get discouraged by that.

The last point that I want to make, is that in spite of what we know about the blockade,

in spite of the changes and the diplomatic relationships, in spite of what Obama can do, there is still elements or issues about the blockade that have happened just since last December. Since last December there have been problems that Cuba has identified that stem directly from the blockade. And I'm going to mention some of them. [...] There is one aspect that actually relates to Canada. A couple of Canadians traveled to Cuba and they paid their expenses through Paypal. Well, that was frozen, so basically the U.S. firm Paypal has frozen the account and the payment that these two Canadians had made about their trip to Cuba. [...] This is ridiculous. In Japan the Costco membership of a Cuban diplomat was terminated. Because this was a Cuban citizen, Costco took it upon themselves to say, oh no, he cannot be a member of Costco, and terminated their membership. This has happened just last June.

So anyway, I think with that, I will end, but I will end with a question. Now given all of this, and given that this is now as a resolution that in fact will be presented at the UN and will be voted on at the UN on the 27th of October. How is the U.S. going to vote? We know that for 23 years they have been voting against and against and against. Or in favor of the blockade let's say. Now, how will they vote this year? I will end with that question, I don't have the answer. It's quite a dilemma for them to decide now which way to go. And I think that is when we will probably get a good hint of their good intentions or their real intentions.

Thank you.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) Continues Organizing Against Imperialist War and Occupation!

By Janine Solanki

Within MAWO's events and actions planned for September, it became necessary to discuss a humanitarian crisis that is the direct result of over 14 years of the new era of war and occupation. This crisis, of course, is the refugee crisis that is seeing huge numbers of refugees from the Middle East and Africa desperately seeking safety and security on European shores.

On Tuesday September 8th, MAWO organized a public forum titled "Hands Off Iraq! Hands Off Syria! War, Occupation and the ISIS/ISIL Crisis". Following the videos, the first speaker was Mamdoh Ashir, an Iraqi-Canadian and Muslim community activist. He spoke to give more insight into how the U.S. occupation of Iraq fueled sectarian divisions which helped create ISIS/ISIL, and furthermore how ISIS/ISIL benefits from U.S. weapons and covert support. The next speaker, Thomas Davies, an editorial board

member of the Fire This Time Newspaper, gave further perspective on the effects of war on Iraq and Syria. He also discussed how the current refugee crisis in Europe is the clearest indication of how devastating these wars have been to make Iraq and Syria totally unlivable, as both of these countries have some of the highest numbers of refugees.

On Saturday September 12th, MAWO organized a monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign, in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery in Downtown Vancouver. This month, alongside demands of "Hands Off Syria! Hands Off Iraq! No War on Yemen!" protesters also demanded "Open the Borders: Let Refugees of War and Occupation in!" Organizers approached passer-bys to sign on to a petition against Canada's participation in military intervention and sanctions on Syria, and the information table was busy with people stopping to talk to organizers,

sign petitions and pick up antiwar literature. Following an afternoon of petitioning, the action culminated with a rally in which Azza Rojbi, MAWO executive committee member, and Thomas Davies spoke and encouraged people who stopped to listen to look beyond the media reports of refugees arriving in Europe, and to question why so many people are risking their lives and leaving their homelands. The speakers emphasized how governments in Europe, Canada and the US must take responsibility for the causing the refugee crisis through their wars and occupations by opening the borders to refugees and stopping their wars and occupations.

From forums and discussions to demonstrations and petition drives, Mobilization Against War and Occupation will continue to organize against the new era of war and occupation. The refugee crisis is making it clear that war and occupation cannot simply be ignored because it it seems far away. All peace-loving people must demand that imperialist governments stop their wars and occupations, and demand self-determination for all oppressed nations.



200,000 Homemakers to Join Social Security in Ecuador by 2016

September 30, 2015 (teleSUR English)

Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa delivered the closing remarks at a three-day conference held in Quito on Wednesday in which he gave a passionate speech advocating for a redistribution of the country's wealth.

Speaking at the conference, President Correa argued that in order to eliminate economic inequalities, the country must introduce policies aimed at redistributing the country's wealth.

He also went on to defend the government-led inheritance tax proposal which he stated would put an end to the "illegitimate accumulation of wealth," by the country's economic elite.

During his speech, President Correa criticized the role of the media in its attack against the tax proposal, which sparked violent protests from sectors of the Ecuadorean elite earlier this year.

The Ecuadorean leader condemned Latin American media outlets for what he described as "defending the commercial interests of elites," arguing that a genuine democratization of media begins with diversifying the ownership of media.

"The Latin American press are some of the worst. They are only subservient to the powers that be," Correa said.

Media in Latin America have traditionally been consolidated into the hands of a few wealthy families and large media conglomerates.

Over the last decade and a half, however, several governments in the region, including Ecuador have introduced measures to democratize media.

Under Ecuador's new Organic Communications Law, media ownership is divided into thirds: one third of the broadcast spectrum to private media, one third to community based media, and one third to public media.

Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa was speaking at the ELAP summit in Quito, Ecuador, a gathering of representatives from progressive governments and movements across Latin America, including representatives from Venezuela, Ecuador, and El Salvador.

Evo Morales: War is the Most Lucrative Business for Capitalism

September 25, 2015 (teleSUR English)

Bolivian President Evo Morales delivered a speech on Friday at the U.N. General Assembly calling on world leaders to work together to provide more opportunities to economically disadvantaged populations.

In efforts to achieve this, the Bolivian leader encouraged countries to curb what he described as "unprecedented military spending."

"War is the most lucrative business for capitalism," President Morales said.

Maduro: US Citizens Support Venezuela, Hate Campaigns Failed

September 30, 2015 (teleSUR English)

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Wednesday that his visit to the United States showed that U.S. citizens support Venezuela and the "campaigns of hate" against the Latin American country have failed.

"The campaigns of hate against the homeland of Bolivar and Chavez have failed," Maduro said after attending the 70th United Nations General Assembly.

Maduro further praised the welcoming support he received during his stay in New York City.

"North American citizens and other nationalities manifested their support for Venezuela while we walked through the streets of New York," he said.

While in New York for the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Maduro met with leaders from the Black community in Harlem on Monday, discussing various issues including police brutality and structural racism.

During the the People of African Descent Leadership Summit, President Maduro listened to a panel of activists and experts discuss the current socio-economic challenges faced by Black communities in the United States.

In response, the Venezuelan leader expressed solidarity with the victims of police brutality and discriminatory policing tactics.

"From South America, please believe me when I tell you, that we have also suffered along with you against this old narrative of racism, which continues to afflict our people," Maduro stated.

During his speech, President Maduro highlighted the need to form "a new radical consciousness of humanism" in efforts to combat racial inequalities.

Leading up to the conference, President Maduro also took time to meet with representatives from sectors of the U.S. labor movement.

He also warned of ongoing efforts by wealthy countries to "demonize and criminalize leaders of progressive governments with anti-capitalist agendas."

During his speech, Evo Morales criticized the current global economic system, calling on the international community to genuinely examine the root causes of poverty.

"If we get rid of the capitalist system, then we will get rid of poverty," Morales added.

In his address, President Morales also highlighted the importance of nationalization policies as a strategy to provide governments with greater economic sovereignty over its wealth and natural resources.

Since Morales came to power in 2005, the Bolivian government has become the main wealth generator in the country, distributing this funding through programs and social investments.

As a result, since 2006, social spending in the area of health, education, pensions, and poverty alleviation programs has increased over 45 percent.

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"Rumbo a Cuba"
Initiative

Iniciativa
"Rumbo a Cuba"



RUMBO A CUBA is fundraising for a much needed tractor & freezer truck for the Julio Antonio Mella International Solidarity (CIJAM) Camp in Caimito, Cuba. CIJAM is where thousands of international guests stay while volunteering in Cuba every year! It has been a real challenge for the camp to provide the necessary services to its guests, especially because of the cruel US blockade. We invite you to join us for the following events to support our campaign!

INICIATIVA RUMBO A CUBA es un proyecto para la compra de un tractor y un camión refrigerado para el campamento de solidaridad internacional Julio Antonio Mella (CIJAM), en Caimito, Cuba. El CIJAM es donde miles de brigadistas internacionales de solidaridad con Cuba se alojan mientras hacen el trabajo voluntario en Cuba. Ha sido un verdadero desafío para el campamento proporcionar los servicios necesarios a sus brigadistas, sobre todo a causa del cruel bloqueo impuesto por los Estados Unidos. ¡Por favor, colabore y participe con nosotros para hacer el trabajo en unidad y hermandad para Cuba!

Good News:

Mario Mendoza of "Grupo Humanitario Latinoamericano Canadiense" in Vancouver who is coordinating with the group as well as collaborating with Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, pointed out that this campaign so far has been very successful. To this day they have collected \$5700 and support is growing in other cities in Canada as well. Mario invited all supporters of Cuba to get involved and help to reach the goal of \$10,000 in the campaign.

For more information:

The Rumbo a Cuba Initiative is a project of

VCSC Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba

www.vancubasolidarity.com

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Grupo Humanitario de Latinoamericanos Canadienses en Vancouver

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Editorial Parliamentary Federal Election in Canada and Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice

The coming federal election on October 19, 2015 has revealed a new dynamic in the political process in Canada, which is the result of the political campaigning of the electoral political parties, left and right. It has also revealed the political characteristic of the current era of politics in Canada. In a nutshell, it exposes the low level of energy and enthusiasm of all major five political parties (including BQ), as well as a lack of interest of the general population, and especially young people, to participate in the electoral process. The balance and relationship of social and political forces in Canada has remained the same: the continuation of the crisis of working class leadership; low level of class struggle and lack of major resistance to ruling class attacks; relative stability of capitalist class and a weak left, who is becoming more and more Status Quo Left (SQL). However, the deepening world-wide capitalist crises, the imperialist wars and occupations, the Cold War II initiated by the US and other imperialists, have all created a favourable situation for the coming radicalization and struggles in Canada and in the world. For us working class, poor and oppressed people, regardless of the outcome of this election, the lessons will be the same. We have to build an independent campaign for our own rights and interests outside of the current Canadian political establishment, right or left.

Today in Canada we do not see any electoral political party on the left representing a clear independent revolutionary working class program. Thus, our political support for far-left political parties is a critical support. With a concrete and objective approach, we realize that while they are short of having a clear independent working class program, it is also true that their programs and electoral platforms are far ahead of reformist parties on the left and worthy of working class support.

We do not promote or encourage working and oppressed people to participate in the federal or provincial elections as if this is their way of fighting for their rights or their path to political power, contrary to what ruling class parties and even, unfortunately, some political parties on the left are suggesting. However, we do not boycott the elections either! These elections regardless of working class input are happening all the time, they come and go. Capitalist elections and parliamentarism are the way of capitalist democracy and the political process to consolidate the power of the capitalist ruling class and their corporate base. Capitalist democracy is an ideology, government, state and culture. We do not promote them, but we do participate in bourgeois elections when they occur, however, tactically not strategically. Why? Because these elections are an opportunity for the working class to exercise its right to participate in the political process in order to gain confidence and leadership. However, not in order to accept the capitalist political framework and consequently develop illusions, but to objectively and subjectively develop an understanding of the limitations and inadequacies of bourgeois

democracy for working and poor people, the mass majority.

The current federal election reveals many important and vital political issues/lessons for working and poor people:

First, the growing, although slow, radicalization of working, poor and oppressed people in Canada is the result of both a growing dissatisfaction and resentment towards the capitalist ruling class and Harper Conservative government. Ignoring Indigenous rights issues, participation in wars and occupations abroad, as well as, the continued attacks on the standard of living of people in Canada through limiting human and democratic rights as well as by implementing more and more austerity measures which further depresses income, market and economy in Canada. Thus, the coming period will be marked by an intensification of class battles and conflicts.




Second, confusion and lack of transparency within the electoral left, such as using terms like “Canadian values”, has certainly ignored and distorted the fact that “values” are a class-based notion; they are not “nation” or “Canada” based.

Third, The issue of an “independent foreign policy” for Canada is also confusing and misleading because the question is, independent from whom? To begin with, Canada’s ruling class is independent and pursues its own imperialist interests. All imperialists do the same, although there are convergences and divergences between them! In working class language “independent foreign policy” can mean only one thing: Internationalism! In other words, to be for the unity of all working and oppressed people around the world. In imperialist countries like Canada, the only way working and poor people can truly exercise their “independent foreign policy” is when they are in power.

Fourth, “Canadian sovereignty” is another issue that is in part similar to point number three, and also implies erroneously that the Canadian imperialist ruling class is not independent from the US ruling class and its foreign policy and pictures their collaboration as the subordination of Canada. Fundamentally, calling for the sovereignty of an imperialist country is promoting bourgeois nationalism. In an era of imperialist decay, this is extremely dangerous to the interests of working people under imperialist attack around the world as well as oppressed nations in Canada such as Indigenous nations and Quebec. The context and political aim of demanding “Canadian sovereignty” is chauvinistic. This demand not only undermines the international solidarity of working and poor people but is also against the real unity of oppressed people in Canada.

Having stated the above, we believe certain candidates in different ridings could make a difference from the point of view of community and ethnic representation, specific oppressed layers of society, direct labour representation or particular local struggles, concrete political disputes, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, youth rights, etc. Nonetheless, where the choice is between reactionaries such as the Conservatives and progressives such as the NDP, we recommend the latter. As well, where the choice is based on participation of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada (MLPC) and the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), we recommend the candidates of these parties with priority to the MLPC.

Within our framework explained above, Fire This Time presents an example of three recommendations of candidates to vote for in British Columbia whom we believe could genuinely make a difference at the local and/or federal level.

Vancouver—South	Nanaimo—Ladysmith	Cariboo—Prince George
		
CHARLES BOYLAN Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada	PAUL MANLY Green Party of Canada	DARCY ROBINSON Communist Party of Canada
Fire This Time Newspaper recommends Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada candidate Charles Boylan. Charles is a well-known advocate for social justice in Vancouver using his weekly radio program to encourage critical discussions on important social justice issues. Charles has also been an especially active organizer in the campaign to repeal police-state bill C-51.	Fire This Time Newspaper recommends Green Party of Canada candidate Paul Manly for his principled support of the Palestinian cause. In 2014, the federal NDP denied his candidacy for the 2015 election over comments he made in support of Palestine. Instead of retracting his comments, Manly was accepted onto the ticket of the Green Party of Canada never apologizing for taking a principled position.	Fire This Time Newspaper recommends Communist Party of Canada candidate Darcy Robinson for his leadership role in the social justice community. Robinson has taken a leading role in many social justice campaigns including that of solidarity with Cuba and Venezuela. Robinson has also worked with many different social justice groups encouraging a spirit of unity and working together in the social justice movement.

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sheer numbers, the city has one of the highest homeless populations in the country, despite having a population of just 380,000.



Remaking New Orleans

In the years since Katrina, opportunistic developers and politicians have used the destruction of the city to rebuild the city according to their own interests, rather than the interest of residents. Public schools have largely been replaced with charter schools, many of them run by private management companies. Just three weeks after Katrina hit, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco announced that Charity Hospital would be closed. Since 1736, Charity Hospital had served the city's poor – and in the present day, those without medical insurance. The closure of the hospital left hundreds of thousands without access to medical care.

During and after Katrina, widespread accusations of racism were directed at all levels of government from citizens as well as humanitarian and activist organizations. The overwhelming majority – 98% – of residents of the Lower Ninth Ward were black. Many believed that the government would have responded faster if the worst affected areas had been wealthier and whiter. Some also believed the lack of action was intended to force the poor and black people to leave the city.

Whether or not the lack of response to



Katrina was planned in this way, forcing poor and black people out of the city was indeed the end result. More than 100,000 black residents of New Orleans left after the storm and never returned. Moreover, black residents of the city today are more likely to be living in poverty than before Katrina, according to a recent American Community Survey. The city tried to 'clean up' by restructuring social housing and increasing services and businesses that would attract wealthier residents. But these improvements to the city's image have done nothing to decrease poverty in the city – only to marginalize the poor even more, pushing many onto the streets and into abandoned buildings left in Katrina's wake.

Perhaps most telling is the fact that while most of the city has been rebuilt, the Lower Ninth Ward remains a near ghost town. It is not just the risk of flood which has prevented people from rebuilding, though. Many people could not afford to rebuild their homes, and there has been little effort from government to aid them.

What Could Have Been Done Instead? – The Cuban Revolutionary Example

For all the great accomplishments of humanity, we still remain vulnerable to the great power of Mother Nature. Hurricanes cause massive destruction around the globe each year. But while we may not be able to save homes or infrastructure from their ferocity, we can do much, much more to prevent the greatest tragedy: the loss of human life.

Just one month before Katrina made landfall in the US, Hurricane Dennis struck Cuba. The massive Category 4 storm caused around \$2 billion in damage to the island; however, just ten people lost their lives. In fact, between 1996 and 2002, only 16 people were killed in the six hurricanes which struck the island nation. This is not simply a matter of luck; it is a matter of preparedness from a revolutionary government which makes people the number one priority. During Hurricane Dennis, Cuba successfully evacuated 1.5 million people – more than a tenth of the country's population – from the areas in greatest danger. The country has a meticulous evacuation plan which is practiced in schools and communicated to all citizens. Transportation is arranged out of areas which are in danger; special accommodations are made for the sick

and the elderly. Each residential block has a person designated to take a census to make sure no one is left behind. Once evacuated, Cubans go to pre-arranged shelters to wait for the storm to pass.

Cuba has been commended internationally for the exemplary way in which it deals with hurricanes. So how does a country with far fewer resources than the US manage this? It is not just a matter of exemplary organization but of priorities as well. In fact, Cuba's ability to respond to disasters such as hurricanes begins long before they strike. On every level, Cuban society is organized to encourage active participation from its citizens. Every community across the country has an organization to respond to the needs of that particular neighbourhood. Representatives of all levels of government live and work in the communities they represent and as such are able to truly understand the needs of the people. Cubans are familiar with and take pride in this level of participation in their communities. They know that when disaster strikes, they can trust their government to do its utmost to protect their lives. They also understand that they have a responsibility to ensure that they and others in their



A survivor walks among piles of bodies of those killed by Hurricane Katrina.

community – especially the most vulnerable – get to safety.

This level of organization and human response is possible because Cuba is a socialist country. As such, both people and government are organized to work collectively and put the needs of people first. Compare this to disaster response programs in the US or Canada, for example. Here, disaster response is largely viewed as an individual effort. You may know, for example, that you should evacuate in case of a disaster, but where would you go? If you were sick, injured, or otherwise unable to get yourself to safety, does the government have a plan in place to ensure you are removed from harm's way? In capitalist countries, disaster response is not a community effort; it is survival of the fittest – or the richest. As Katrina tragically demonstrated, those who

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and requires a global solution. One which recognizes that developing countries and poor and working people around the world have had to suffer the greatest consequences due to the profit driven and disastrous policies of first world governments and their big business allies. When those who created the problem tell us it is impossible to fix, we must remind ourselves that if all of the resources which are today squandered and war, occupation and the obscene drive for super-profits were dedicated to creating a healthy and sustainable world we would have been able to accomplish the feat years ago. As the slogan on many signs at the Peoples Climate March said, "There is No Planet B". We must all join the anti capitalist and climate justice movement to continue to educate, organize and mobilize until we have the planet and livelihoods we all need and deserve.

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for the human and economic damages they still endure." Here Cuban President Raúl Castro has done an excellent job of outlining many of the injustices Cuba continues to live through at the hands of the U.S. government. Here he makes it clear that this path towards normalization is going to be a bumpy road and Cuba is going to continue defending its principals and is in no way handing itself and its revolution over to the U.S. government.

The formal reestablishment of US-Cuba relations, has been a historic victory for Cuba. After 56 years of the United States government trying to isolate Cuba and defeat its revolution, they have not been successful. In fact, the U.S. government has had to: release all 5 of the Cubans who were being held unjustly in U.S. prisons; take Cuba off their list of "state sponsors of terror" and finally the U.S. government has had to begin dismantling their cruel blockade against the people of Cuba. Meanwhile Cuba has stood firm in the principals it has been defending since the triumph of the Cuban socialist revolution in 1959 and continuation of Cuban socialist project.

The Future of U.S.-Cuba relations

For the past 23 years in a row the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) has internationally condemned the United States' blockade on Cuba in a resolution put forward by Cuba. In fact in October 2014, for the 23rd time, the UNGA voted to condemn the US blockade on Cuba with 188 countries voting against the blockade and only two in favour (the US and Israel).

On September 21, 2015 the Associated Press printed an unexpected headline, "US weighs abstention on Cuba embargo vote at UN". The article explains, "As it does every year, the U.N. General Assembly will vote as early as next month to demand the embargo's end. But this time, U.S. officials told the AP that the United States could abstain instead of

voting against the resolution as it normally does. It is unheard of for a U.N. member state not to oppose resolutions critical of its own laws. And by not actively opposing the resolution, the administration would be effectively siding with the world body against the Republican-led House and Senate, which have refused to repeal the embargo despite calls from President Barack Obama to do so. [...] No final decision on how to vote has yet been made, said four administration officials who weren't authorized to speak publicly on sensitive internal deliberations and demanded anonymity. [...] The very idea of an abstention prompted immediate Republican criticism. Republican presidential candidate Marco Rubio, a Cuban-American senator from Florida, said that by abstaining, Obama would be "putting international popularity ahead of the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States.""

This idea is very controversial for the United States government and its ruling-class circles. That the U.S. could abstain in a vote that condemns its own policy towards Cuba? Wouldn't it be a small sweet victory? Of course, the resolution at the UNGA is non-binding, as it has been for the past 23 years just condemning U.S. for its cruel and inhuman blockade of Cuba, and at the same time it would seem to be some form of poetic, ethical and moral justice, even though it is not the real and full justice that the Cuban people deserve.

The path forward for the United States and Cuba is unclear at this time. It seems there is a goal, the "normalization implementation" stage. However, is the United States really interested to get there? Is there really a will to treat Cuba with the dignity it deserves and is required for normalization? Until we have the full dismantling of the U.S. blockade, the U.S. military out of Guantanamo and an end to the U.S. "regime change" programs in Cuba, it is unrealistic and naive to believe it.

military headquarters in Iraq for Russia, Syria and Iran. The words "feckless," "reckless" and "short-sighted" are not really adequate to capture the degree of incompetence of a foreign policy based ultimately on the arrogance of imperial power.

Original article appears at

<http://www.liberationnews.org>

**Brian Becker is the National Coordinator of U.S. anti-war coalition, ANSWER*

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through the creation in Baghdad of a new international center for military coordination against ISIS that includes Russia, Iran, Syria and the government of Iraq must be regarded as a historical irony of the first order. When Bush and Cheney ordered the criminal invasion of Iraq in 2003, the last thing they could have foreseen a decade later is a post-occupation Iraqi government providing a

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If you find Fire This Time to be an effective tool in the struggle of oppressed people for justice, more than ever, we need your support. On top of our regular costs of production, we regularly send members of our editorial board on assignment throughout North America, the Caribbean and beyond in order to make Fire This Time a better resource. These efforts have strained our finances.

If you would like to help with a donation, please make cheques payable to "Nita Palmer".

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remain divided and unable to organize to defend our rights and lives against their attacks. Bill C-51, and every other anti-human measure taken to limit our rights before that, are meant to create fear, division and weakness. The good news is that they wouldn't be focusing so much on taking away our rights if they weren't afraid of what happens when we use them. We need to continue to build on the impressive organizing against Bill C-51 so far, with the knowledge that when we work together we can defend and extend the rights of all poor and working people. We are the majority, let's act like it!

OVER 200 CANADIAN ARTISTS SIGN OPEN LETTER OPPOSING BILL C-51

September 29, 2015

Dear Party Leaders,

We are Canadian artists. We have been blessed to be part of a country that does not send poets to gulags, that does not behead people for saying things a government considers critical of it, and that does not murder dissidents and journalists wholesale.

But we know that totalitarian and repressive regimes always try to shut down artists, along with any other independent voices. We are alert to the possibilities: we, and all who wish a free and open society, must strongly oppose such tendencies when they arise.

Bill C-51 directly attacks the creative arts and free expression in this country.

This bill was rammed through Parliament by the Harper Conservative government, despite a huge public outcry and without due consultation. As many experts have pointed out, this bill allows the government to silence dissenting voices without oversight or accountability. It criminalizes "advocating or promoting the commission of terrorism offences in general," which, because of this vague wording, could be interpreted in some very stupid ways. In effect, it gives the government carte blanche to suppress any voice they don't like.

Is it promoting terrorism if we:

- write a spy novel about an assassination plot?
- record a song questioning our government's agenda?
- paint a mural about the conflict in Syria?

•produce a documentary on security threats in Canada?

•put on an art show critical of the oil sands?

•make a film with an environmental theme?

Creativity, expression, opinion, and art are not the same as terrorist propaganda. Through its "chill" effect, C-51 undermines one of the chief freedoms of a democratic society: the right of every Canadian to free speech and free expression, including free artistic expression.

In addition, Bill C-51, because of the lack of oversight and accountability, is an invitation to intellectual property theft. All creative classes, including entrepreneurs and digital creators, are threatened by it. And every citizen is subject to blackmail, due to unlimited, unaccountable access to personal information.

We agree with the almost 300,000 Canadians who have called on the government to scrap this reckless, dangerous and ineffective legislation through the petition at <http://KillC51.ca>.

This election we will be voting to protect our artistry, our rights, and our freedoms: we will be voting for the repeal of C-51. We hope you will join us in ensuring that all Canadians are no longer subject to the chilling effects of C-51 and targeted by government censorship.

We can defend against terrorists in much better ways than this.

Signed,

Margaret Atwood, Author and more than 200 artists in Canada

Afghanistan article

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of security - many of them worsened by the US/NATO presence in the country - prevent millions of children from attending school. In practical terms, education in Afghanistan today is little better than it was under the Taliban - and certainly far worse than it was before the country was torn apart by three decades of war and occupation.

Over the last fourteen years, the US and NATO have proven that they are incapable of bringing any kind of positive change to Afghanistan - the education system is just one example. The presence of foreign troops in the country is only fuelling corruption and violence. Foreign armies and aid agencies - including Canada's - seem content with showing off a few schools built and reporting completely inaccurate facts about the state of education in the country.

In light of their utter failure to improve the lives of Afghans over the past fourteen years, the US must pull all its troops and contractors out of the country immediately, as should countries such as Canada which have military or police remaining in the country in a so-called 'advisory' capacity. For centuries, Afghans have built their own country, raising it up time and again out of the destruction of foreign occupation. They will once again. It will not be easy, but it is the only way forward out of the quagmire of destruction and corruption which foreign forces have brought.

Those of us in Canada - and around the world for that matter - must continue to call for an end to the occupation of Afghanistan. Our duty to stand with the Afghan people against this atrocity did not end when Canadian troops left the country, and it will not end until the last foreign forces leave Afghanistan.

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Now the point that I'm making is this: Never at any time in the history of our people in this country have we made advances or advancement, or made progress in any way just based upon the internal good will of this country, or based upon the internal activity of this country. We have only made advancement in this country when this country was under pressure from forces above and beyond its control. Because the internal moral consciousness of this country is bankrupt. It hasn't existed since they first brought us over here and made slaves out of us. They trick up on the confirmation and make it appear that they have our good interests at heart. But when you study it, every time, no matter how many steps they take us forward, it's like we're standing on a—what do you call that thing?—a treadmill. The treadmill is moving backwards faster than we're able to go forward in this direction. We're not even standing still—we're walking forward, at the same time we're going backward...

So don't you run around here trying to make friends with somebody who's depriving you of your rights. They're not your friends. No, they're your enemies. Treat them like that and fight them, and you'll get your freedom. And after you get your freedom, your enemy will respect you. He will respect you.

Excerpt from Malcolm X Speech to Civil Rights Workers from Mississippi (Jan. 1, 1965)

Ayotzinapa Solidarity Continues! Vancouver Forum Marks One Year Since the Forced Disappearance of the 43 Mexican Students

By Noah Fine

On September 26th, 2015, supporters of human rights around the world gathered to keep momentum going one year after the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students in Iguala, Mexico.

On September 26th, 2014, a group of students from a small rural community in the state of Guerrero, Mexico called, Ayotzinapa, were traveling to participate in a protest in Mexico, City. Upon arriving in the city of Iguala, police alongside unknown armed men dressed in black laid siege on the students. The siege, which all together lasted more than 3 hours, ended with 6 dead and 43 missing students.

The case of the Ayotzinapa 43 has garnered worldwide attention as the government of Mexico continues its attempt to cover up the truth.

A forum was held in Vancouver organized by Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice to mark this anniversary by calling for justice for the families of the 43 Ayotzinapa students.

Fire This Time editorial board member, Tamara Hansen welcomed participants to the forum. The panel of speakers at the forum included, Mexican social justice activists, Montse Rueda who gave a history and chronology of the case of the 43 and Jannu Casanova who spoke about the background of the students and the

school they were studying at. Chilean social justice activist Macarena Cataldo and Cuba solidarity activist Noah Fine brought the case of the 43 into the perspective of the Latin American struggle for social justice as well as the world-wide struggle against imperialism

respectively. All of the speakers have been active for the last year in the struggle for justice for the 43 students.

Leading up to the one-year anniversary of the disappearance of

the 43, the government of Mexico released its version of what it says happened on that day. "What the government wanted to do when they came up with this 'Historical Truth' was to appease the people by saying 'Hey, this is the truth, we've done our job, let us be, forget about it.'" Stated

Montse Rueda in her presentation. "But with all of this international support it was really hard for the government to get away with it. The fact that we had so many people backing up the movement, made it extremely difficult for the government to close this down,"

Rueda concluded.

A dynamic discussion and question period took place after the presenters finished. Participants at the forum left energized with the spirit of the family members of the 43 who have not given up in the search for justice for the 43.

One year later, the demand of supporters of the 43 around the world continues: "They took them alive, we want them back alive!"



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have the financial means to evacuate will be able to save themselves, while the poorest will perish.

Disaster Capitalism

Hurricane Katrina was an act of nature, but the terrible loss of life and subsequent worsening of living conditions for hundreds of thousands was an act of capitalism. The tragic loss of life in New Orleans was not a result simply of poor management or corruption on the part of FEMA or other government agencies. Ignoring climate change which contributed to the disaster, cutting funding for levees that would protect the city, and failing to evacuate the most vulnerable were all actions of a government and an economic system which made funding wars and giving tax breaks to big corporations the priority above protecting human lives. The responsibility for this terrible tragedy lies squarely on the shoulders of an economic system which puts the interests of the capitalist class before the interests of the vast majority of people.

As our climate continues to change, we will see more frequent and more extreme storms and weather systems - and with it, unfortunately, more loss of life. It is poor, working, and marginalized people who will bear the brunt of these disasters. If the capitalist economic system cannot meet even our most basic need for survival, perhaps it is time to give the Cuban way a chance.

OUR HERITAGE



Clara Zetkin

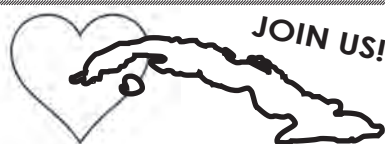
German Marxist theorist, activist, and organizer of the first International Women's Day in 1911

The following are excerpts from Clara Zetkin's article "The Struggle Against New Imperialistic Wars" written in 1922.

The danger of war is increasing rather than decreasing. But even among the bourgeoisie there is opposition to war. Commercial capital cannot find its markets in other countries without first sending armies to these countries, but financial capital can exploit its forces only through the political dominance in the countries in which it invests its money, and this can only be got by military conquests, and therefore the policy of the governments is for war all the time. War shows the crisis of capitalism. As war becomes a permanent institution, it exposes the critical character of the position in which capitalism finds itself, and this proves the necessity for the abolition of the present ruling powers and the creation of a new society...

The working class must get all the means of life into its hands, and this must be preceded by getting the means of death out of the hands of the capitalist class. This is only to be got by struggle. The class struggle alone can be a struggle against war. Pacifism is not a struggle against war...

We must reconstruct the working class state at the expense of capitalism. Capitalism is doomed. Our struggle and our tactics must be directed towards the great goal, to organize the powers of the workers; to inspire them for the struggle and to develop it, so that when capitalism calls again for war the working class of the world can answer with a call for world revolution.



Introducing New Organization in Vancouver

FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE (FCAB-VANCOUVER)

Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver, formerly the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver, upon celebrating the historic victory of the freedom of all 5 Cuban Heroes began to reorganize themselves in a new organization to respond to new challenges in defence of Cuba's sovereignty and against the U.S. blockade. With 10 years of experience through activities in defence of the 5 Cuban Heroes, the group decided alongside many around the world to focus their efforts on ending the cruel U.S. Blockade.

Just as they had done to protest for the freedom of the Cuban 5, FCAB-Van has committed to protest every month in front of the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver. The group has chosen the 17th of each month as the date marking the day the Cuban 5 Heroes returned home.

Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver demand:

- End the Blockade on Cuba Now!
- Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!
- US Government Stop the Campaign of 'Regime Change' in Cuba and Immediately Stop Interfering in Cuba's Sovereignty and Self-determination!

For more information visiit:
www.vancubavsblockade.org



International Days of Actions against the U.S. Blockade in Washington DC

Cuba solidarity activists from across the United States, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Canada gathered in Washington DC to participate in the International Days of Action against the Blockade. The days of actions took place between September 16-18 and were organized by the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity for the Peoples, IFCO - Pastors for Peace, the National Network on Cuba, the Institute for Policy Studies and the Venceremos Brigade.



Vancouver Activists Organize Picket Action and Other Activities Against U.S. Blockade of Cuba

Although diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U.S. have been restored with the opening of their respective embassies, many of the U.S.'s criminal policies against Cuba are still in place for more than 50 years.

On Thursday September 17th, 2015, the newly formed group Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver (FCAB-Van) and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) co-organized their first monthly protest to end the U.S. blockade in front of the U.S. Consulate. This action was also called to coincide with events taking place in Washington DC, Toronto and Montreal as part of an International period of action demanding an immediate end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

Dozens of friends of Cuba gathered in front of the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver chanting loud and clear, "Lift the blockade on Cuba now," "Cuba Si, Bloqueo No!"

During the protest and in between energetic rounds of picketing, participants heard from a variety of local Cuba solidarity activist. The protest also received greetings from the Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Toronto as well as a phone greeting from FCAB-Van delegates participating in the Days of Action Against the Blockade in Washington DC organized by the

The actions started with two days of visits and meeting with members of the U.S. Congress, emphasizing the negative impact of the blockade on both Cuba and the U.S.

The following day participants gathered for an ecumenical cultural evening celebrating the return of the Cuban 5 heroes. The evening included a musical performance by the well known Hip Hop duo Rebel Diaz.

The celebration of the freedom of the Cuban 5 continued with the opening of a photographic exhibit dedicated to them. Several Cuban photographers contributed to the exhibit as well as North American photographer Bill Hackwell who also curated the exhibit.

A delegation from the executive of Friends of

International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity for the Peoples.

• Forum Against Blockade

The highly motivated and energetic participants in the picket moved across Vancouver to Joe's Cafe for a public forum and discussion titled "Reestablishing U.S./Cuba Relations & the Necessity of Lifting the U.S. Blockade on Cuba". The forum featured Nino Pagliccia, long time Cuba solidarity activist and editor of

the new book "Cuba Solidarity in Canada", as well as Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba and writer of the book "Five Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership." An excerpt from the presentations of Tamara and Nino at the forum are available to read in this issue of Fire This Time.

• Fundraising for Cuba Solidarity Activities

The following day, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) held a dance and a fundraiser night with live music, dancing, and delicious food! The night began with a live Latin American guitar and flute performance by El Trabador Beto Fuentes. The audience then took to the dance floor enjoying the tunes played by DJ Carlitos Tunes Tunes and DJ Don Julio.

Proceeds from the event were shared and donated with the "Iniciativa Rumbo a Cuba" campaign to bring a freezer truck and tractor to the 'Julio Antonio Mella' Volunteer Work Camp (CIJAM) in Caimito, Cuba and towards the Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) campaign to end the U.S. blockade on Cuba.

Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver (FCAB-Van) and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) vow to continue organizing against the cruel U.S. blockade against Cuba. Join us at our second monthly protest on October 17 4pm in front of the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver!

Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver (FCAB-Van) participated in the celebration of the freedom of the Cuban 5 and the actions in Washington against the blockade.

The final day of the actions was an all day conference titled "The U.S. blockade Against Cuba: why it's wrong and what we must do to end it". Conference participants heard from different local and international Cuba solidarity activists. Speakers included Canadian authors Arnold August and Stephen Kimber. The highlight of the conference was the arrival of José Ramón Cabañas, the new Cuban Ambassador to the United States. The ambassador thanked friend of Cuba for their solidarity and continuous struggle against the blockade.

A FREE COMMUNITY EVENT

Monthly Antiwar Rally & Petition Drive

**STOP THE WARS!
END THE OCCUPATION!
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR
ALL OPPRESSED NATIONS!
OPEN THE BORDERS:
STOP WAR & OCCUPATION
NOT REFUGEES!**

**HANDS OFF
AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ,
SYRIA, LIBYA & YEMEN!**

No to Islamophobia!
Repeal Inhuman and Repressive Bill C-51!
U.S./EU/NATO/Canada: Hands Off Ukraine!
U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!
Lift All Sanctions Against Iran!
End the Blockade of Gaza!
Self-Determination for Palestine!
End the Blockade of Cuba!
Free Private Manning, Soldier of Humanity!
No to U.S. Drones!
U.S. and All Imperialists Out of Afghanistan Now!
U.S. Hands Off North Africa and the Middle East!
Self-Determination for Indigenous Nations and All Oppressed Nations!
Money for Jobs, Housing, Healthcare and Education,
Not For War and Occupation!



**Saturday October 24
2pm Vancouver Art Gallery
Robson St. (downtown Vancouver)**

**f Mobilization Against War & Occupation @MAWOvan
www.mawovancouver.org**



**END THE
U.S. BLOCKADE
ON CUBA NOW!**



2ND MONTHLY PICKET ACTION

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 17 4PM
U.S. CONSULATE**

1075 W. PENDER ST, DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, CANADA

ORGANIZED BY:

**FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE - VANCOUVER
NOBLOQUEOVANCOUVER@GMAIL.COM | @NoBloqueoVAN**

WWW.VANCUBAVSBLOCKADE.ORG

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